

THE *Story*
OF THE
Mennonites

by DR. C. HENRY SMITH

Story of the Mennonites

This "Story of the Mennonites" aims to cover the whole field of Mennonite history from the time of Menno Simons, who lived in the days of Martin Luther, to the outbreak of the present world war; and includes not only the religious experiences of the Mennonites, but—since they have often formed self-sufficient economic and social units with special political privileges—their whole economic and social life as well, in Europe, Asia, North and South America.

Because of their migrations through the centuries from one country to another in search of religious toleration and civil liberty, the Mennonites have developed certain differences in their social and religious practices.

These linguistic, national, and social variations have resulted in the formation of numerous separate groups and branches of the denomination. The author has attempted to treat each group impartially, without favor or prejudice, and has given each the space in this book, which in his judgment it deserves in relation to the movement as a whole.

MENNONITES AS PIONEERS

1. Menno Simons was born in Holland in 1496, and died in northern Germany in 1559.
2. The Mennonites were the first modern religious group to preach and practise religious toleration, separation of church and state, democracy in church government, and opposition to war.
3. They helped to found the first German settlement in the New World in Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683, arriving in Philadelphia, just two years later than William Penn himself.
4. In 1662 Pieter Cornelisz Plockhoy established a Dutch Mennonite colony on the Delaware, which so far as known, was the first American settlement to forbid the employment of Negro slaves; and in 1683 several Mennonites also joined other Germantown settlers in demanding that the Pennsylvania Quakers go on record against slavery.
5. In 1690, William Rittenhouse, the first Mennonite minister in America, built on the Wissahickon, now in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, the first paper mill in America.
6. Christopher Dock, the "pious Mennonite schoolmaster on the Skippack" wrote in 1750, the earliest treatise on school teaching known in colonial America.
7. In 1748 the Ephrata Brethren, of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, manufactured the paper, translated from the Dutch edition of 1660, and printed on their own hand press the large Mennonite Martyrs' Mirror, said to be up to this time the most ambitious publishing undertaking of America.
8. Everywhere in the westward march of the pioneers Mennonites were among the earliest settlers in new lands on the Conestoga in 1710; along the Shenandoah in 1727; along the headwaters of the Ohio in southwestern Pennsylvania, in 1767; in Ohio, 1798; Illinois, 1831; and Iowa, 1839; and later in states farther west.

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The Story of The MENNONITES

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To My Wife
LAURA IODER SMITH
This Book
is
Affectionately
Dedicated

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FOREWORD

This *Story of the Mennonites* is largely a revision and enlargement of my earlier book *The Mennonites*. Its chief excuse exists in the fact that the latter is now long out of print; and since its publication, just before the close of the late World War, the status of the Mennonites, especially in central Europe and in Russia as well as in America, has been greatly changed by the course of events. A greatly increased interest among Mennonite scholars in research in recent years, too, has made available much information not known even a few years ago.

While the work has been based on careful research in all the available source material on the subject, yet I have continually kept the general reader in mind in my writing, rather than the specialist; and for that reason I have not cluttered up the text with foot notes and references to sources. Nor have I added a bibliography, since by so doing I would have been merely compiling a list of the thousands of books and documents as easily available, to any one interested, in the printed catalogues of the various Mennonite libraries in this country and Europe as in an appendix to this volume.

Most of the general Mennonite histories in America thus far have been written from the standpoint of one of the many branches of the denomination, stressing especially the development of that particular branch, usually at the expense of the others; and thus giving a distorted picture of the denomination as a whole. I have attempted in this narrative to cover the whole Mennonite movement both in Europe and America in all its ramifications, objectively and impartially but sympathetically,

without favor or prejudice; and have given each event, as well as each one of the score or more of the branches and local or national groups the space it deserves, in my judgment, in its relation to the story as a whole.

The Mennonites during much of their history have everywhere formed not only a religious party, but also frequently a distinct economic or social group, or even as in Russia a separate political entity. And so, this narrative has not been confined only to the religious experiences of the Mennonites, but much space has been given to their social and economic development as well.

Special attention is also called to the fact that the story ends with the year 1939, just before the beginning of the present war. Such changes as the war has already brought about in the political affiliations of the various Mennonite groups especially in Germany, France and Poland, consequently are not recorded here. And facts and conditions stated as of that year may need some modification. The coming peace treaty, too, will undoubtedly still further alter the political status of many of the European Mennonites; while the recent conscription act in the United States will furnish another chapter in the history of the non-resistant experiences of the American Mennonites.

I am indebted to many friends for helpful suggestions, the use of manuscripts, critical reading of various chapters, and other courtesies. Among others, I am indebted to Dr. David Rempel, of Palo Alto, California; David Toews, of Rosthern, Saskatchewan; Dr. J. W. Kuehler, of the University of Amsterdam; John Horsch, of Scottdale, Pennsylvania; S. F. Coffman, Vineland, Ontario; J. H. Janzen, Waterloo, Ontario; Dr. A. Warkentin, Newton, Kansas; B. B. Janz, Coaldale, Alberta; H. H. Ewert, Gretna, Manitoba; Professor Alvin J. Miller, Kent University; Professor Benjamin H. Unruh, of Karlsruhe,

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C. Henry Smith,
Bluffton, Ohio.
October 1, 1940.

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EUROPE

I

THE ANABAPTISTS

THE SWISS BRETHREN

Every historical movement, be it political, social, or religious, tends in the course of its progress to throw off both conservative and radical wings. The French Revolution had its emigres and its sansculottes; our own Civil war, its copperheads and its abolitionists. Socialism runs all the way from opportunism to communism. Just as the political parties in Europe during the past hundred years have been classified in accordance with their conservative or liberal attitude toward questions of public policy, and have been named in accordance with their relative position to the presiding officer in the Assembly hall as Right, Center and Left, so, too, the religious groups of the Reformation may be roughly classified upon a similar basis. The Catholics remained the conservative Right; the Lutherans, discarding many of the fundamental doctrines of the Catholics, but yet retaining much of their ceremonialism and ritualism in worship, and a conservative though slightly modified form of the doctrine of the Real Presence, might appropriately be called the Right Center; the Reformed party, much more liberal than the Lutherans both in worship and doctrine, but still retaining one of the central features of the old church, union of state and church, might qualify equally well as the Left Center; while the Anabaptists, the party of the common people, without a religious hierarchy of any sort, basing both their faith and prac-

tise on the example of the New Testament church, preaching a voluntary, free, and independent religious organization entirely separated from the state, were clearly the extreme Left of that day.

The Anabaptists with whom we are here concerned had their beginning as a separate religious body in Zurich, Switzerland as a radical tail of Zwinglianism in the beginning of that movement. In the early period of his reforming career, Zwingli seemed much more inclined than in his later years to radical changes from the old order; especially did he seem more interested than did his Catholic brethren in a study of the Bible, and in finding within its covers a solution for the problems of his day. Soon after his installation as the chief preacher of Zurich in 1518, he preached against tithes, and spoke lightly of church fasts; soon, too, he opposed Swiss military service in the armies of the Pope, though not on Scriptural, but rather on social and economic grounds. As an army chaplain among these mercenary troops he had ample opportunity for observing the evil results of this foreign service, first upon the morals of the troops themselves, and later indirectly upon the Swiss communities to which they returned after service.

But liberal as he was, he did not succeed in satisfying all his co-reformers. There were some to whom the cause of reform was not moving swiftly enough. These were the first to find fault with the mass, the observance of Saints days, the use of pictures and images in worship, and other orthodox Catholic religious practises. In 1522, Wilhelm Reublin, driven out of Basel because of his excessive reforming zeal, having carried a Bible in a procession instead of the usual relics, which he declared to be dead men's bones, joined the Zurich circle as pastor in the neighboring village of Wytekön. The next year this same priest was the first of the clergy

to take a wife. At the same time Ludwig Hetzer, by birth a south German, and by training a learned Hebraist, greatly stirred up the populace with a tract against images and pictures as used in worship. Up in Waldshut, just across the border, Balthasar Hubmaier, a famous theologian and former University rector, was beginning to deny the validity of infant baptism. Simon Stumpf, pastor at Honng, a village just on the outskirts of Zurich, was preaching against tithes and rents.

Zwingli, although inclined to follow these friends of reform, cautioned them to move slowly; and refused to march ahead of public opinion, or to inaugurate any innovations without the consent of the political authorities. Desirous of testing out the opinion of the public, he consented to a general debate in Zurich, in January of 1523, in which all the parties, Catholics included, were to express themselves freely on the religious questions of the day. In this disputation Zwingli was easily the central figure, occupying a middle position between the conservative and liberal groups. He favored, among other innovations, the immediate abolition of the mass, the rejection of celibacy, the dissolution of monasteries and convents, the use of the vernacular instead of Latin in the baptismal service, and a simplification all around of the forms of worship; but he refused to go any further, especially condemning the movement directed against the destruction of images and pictures.

Considerable progress having been made by the reform movement during the summer of 1523, another public discussion was held in October on the issues that now separated the different factions of the Reform group. The Catholics were not represented at this meeting. It was in this debate that Zwingli and his radical friends parted company. When the former suggested in the course of a controversy that certain irreconcilable dif-

ferences between the factions should be referred to the Zurich Council for final decision, Simon Stumpf, the spokesman on this occasion for the radicals declared, "Master Ulrich, you have no right to refer this question to the Council; the matter is already settled, the Spirit of God has decided." Here we have the very heart of what is later known as Anabaptism. Religion is a matter of individual conscience. Neither an ecclesiastical hierarchy, as the Catholics maintained, nor political authority as the Zwinglians declared, has a right to dictate in matters of faith. Just what Stumpf meant by the "Spirit of God" is not important. Whether it was the Bible, or some sort of "inner light" is immaterial. In either case we have here a clear enunciation of the doctrine of religious toleration and full soul liberty.

And so, during the two following years, while the new state church was formulating its policies and practises, the breach between the radical wing and the main body of Zwinglian dissenters was growing ever wider. Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, Wilhelm Reublin, and Simon Stumpf now began to insist not only upon a complete break with the Catholic establishment, but upon a brand new church, completely renovated from the ground up, and based on principles and doctrines so revolutionary that the break with the Zwinglians, too, seemed inevitable. What they asked for now was a "pure" church, not necessarily a church composed of men and women who were sinless, but rather sin-conscious; adult men and women, not children; men and women who knew right from wrong, and who of their own volition as a result of deep seated religious conviction had formed themselves into a voluntary band of worshippers after the example of Apostolic times. This small company, holding these views, was in the habit of meeting in the homes of various members of the group, spending their time largely in

Bible study, in which Zwingli had at first occasionally joined for a time. The more they studied the New Testament the more they were convinced that their conception of the true church was the right one.

Zwingli, whatever his earlier views may have been, was by this time firmly resolved, however, against any church establishment that was not dominated by the Council of Zurich. He was not yet ready for a "pure" church, nor for a separation of church and state. "What will the angels in Heaven have to do on Judgment Day," he said, "if the tares be separated from the wheat here and now." "The Ark contained both pure and impure" said Bullinger, his successor. These and similar childish arguments were advanced by the state church defenders in an attempt to find Biblical authority against religious toleration.

A pure, voluntary, church made up of those definitely conscious of sin, and admitted upon confession of faith, of course left no room in its religious practice for infant baptism, if that event was regarded as an essential symbol of admission into the church. Infant baptism then for a year or two became the chief bone of contention in the arguments between the two groups among the Swiss reformers.

Among the first of the radicals to preach against the practice were Wilhelm Reublin and Balthasar Hubmaier. The former had persuaded many of the parents in his parish of Wytekou, early in 1523, to withhold baptism from their children; while the latter, as we have already seen, had an argument on the subject with Zwingli the following year. Both these men, and their followers after them, maintained that baptism according to the New Testament must be based on faith; and since children can not have faith, their baptism has no validity. Zwingli drawing his arguments from the same Bible

though not always from the New Testament, replied that infant baptism in the New Testament, took the place of circumcision in the Old, and advanced other arguments equally far fetched. There is no place in the Bible where infant baptism is commanded, declared the Biblicists. "Nor can you show where it is forbidden," replied Zwingli. And so the argument continued without convincing either side; but the unbiased student can not help but conclude that from the standpoint of direct Scriptural authority the radicals made out the better case.

Whether Zwingli's earlier liberalism would entitle him to be classed with the party later known as Anabaptists, as some writers on this subject maintain, is highly problematical. That he at one time questioned the validity of infant baptism, in spite of his later defence of the practise, of course is known from his own confession. But he never accepted the heart of what we shall know a little later as Anabaptism—a regenerate church, practising separatism, pacifism and their allied doctrines. His earlier so-called pacifism was based on expediency, and not on religious conviction. A man must be judged not only by what he says, but rather by what he does. Up to 1520, Zwingli drew a papal pension as an army chaplain, and ten years later he led Swiss troops in a fratricidal civil war, himself falling in battle. He never advocated adult baptism; and he never practised religious toleration.

This new controversy led to another public debate on January 17, 1525. The purpose of this meeting, which was sponsored by both Zwingli and the Council, unlike its predecessors, was not to arrive at an open decision on the issue of infant baptism, but rather to silence the opposition. The final decision by the Council in favor of Zwingli's view was a foregone conclusion. The political authorities as well as those of the church were not ready

yet for a pure, voluntary and separatist church. Within a few days after this meeting the Council ordered that all children must be baptized within eight days, the special meetings for Bible study must be discontinued; and such radical leaders of the movement as were not natives of Zurich were to be banished. This last order involved Hetzer, Castelberg, Broetli, and Reublin.

Early Leaders

It may not be out of place here to say a little more about the men who thus far led the movement for an independent church.

First among these must be mentioned Conrad Grebel, native of Zurich, and son of Councilman Jacob Grebel. Conrad, although a layman, was well educated in the schools of his time, including the Universities of Paris and Vienna. He was well connected socially, belonging to one of the most prominent families in the city of Zurich; and was a brother-in-law of Vadian of St. Gall, next to Zwingli the leading Swiss reformer. After leading a rather irregular life as a young man, he finally became interested in the reform movement, associating himself closely with the Zurich leader by whom he was called "that candid and learned youth."

By 1523, however, Grebel began to break with Zwingli. He soon assumed a leading role in the agitation against infant baptism, and finally was the first to administer the rite of rebaptism in 1525, by that act inaugurating the movement that became known as Anabaptism. During the year 1524, together with several others, he had been in correspondence with Thomas Münzer, the south German revolutionist; but there is no evidence that he favored the latter's revolutionary ideas, or that he was in the least influenced by them. He finally died

of the pest in 1526, still a young man, thus undoubtedly escaping a later martyr's death. His father, too, met his death the same year at the hands of a Zurich executioner, though not for religious unorthodoxy, but on a charge of treason.

Felix Mantz, son of a canon of the Minster church was also a native of Zurich. At first an ardent disciple of Zwingli, he followed Grebel into the opposition upon the former's refusal to sanction an apostolic church; and was Grebel's close associate in all the later events; and a most zealous preacher of the new doctrines. He, too, was well educated, being especially a good Hebrew scholar. It was in his mother's home that the small circle of radicals held their Bible readings after their separation from the state church. Frequently imprisoned because he refused to obey the orders of the Zurich Council to cease preaching and baptizing, Mantz was the first martyr of the new cause, being drowned near the head of Zurich Sea in January of 1527.

George Blaurock of Chur, of the House of Jacob, a monastic establishment, called Blaurock because of the color of his cloak, and sometimes also spoken of as "Strong George", was next to the two above mentioned, the most important leader of the new cause immediately after the debate of 1525. His most important work, however, was concerned with preaching Anabaptist gospel throughout northern Switzerland and Tyrol in the years immediately following. The major part of his story, therefore, belongs to a later period. It is said that during the next four years of his short but busy life he baptized over one thousand converts within these regions. He had renounced the Catholic church before 1523. He soon after came to Zwingli for help to solve his religious doubts; but failing to find here a satisfactory answer to his questionings, he cast his lot with the Zurich radicals.

Wilhelm Reublin, born at Rotenburg on the Neckar, the fiery preacher of Wytekon, was one of the first advocates, as we have seen, of radical changes; and was also one of the first to get into trouble with the authorities, being banished from Basle in 1522, and imprisoned in Zurich in 1524. He was intimately associated with Grebel and Mantz in all their religious pioneering, and was present at the January debate. He became an early and influential missionary to Tyrol and Moravia, and seemingly was one of the few Anabaptists who did not fall a victim to the executioner's ax because of his religious faith. He died a natural death sometime near the middle of the century.

These four men were the leaders of the radical movement up to the time of the debate on baptism in 1525, and were present at that historic event. Associated with these four were a number of other equally earnest and pious men with no less zeal, though with perhaps less ability. Among these was Andreas Castelberg, evidently a cripple, for he is frequently spoken of in the early records as Andreas "on crutches." He came originally from Basle, and was known as an ardent advocate of social reform. Heini Aeberli, who furnished a temporary asylum, contrary to the law of the land, in the home of a friend for Hubmaier at the time the latter was exiled from Waldshut, and who was one of the signers with Grebel and others of the letter to Muenzer in 1524, must have taken an aggressive part in all the activities of the Zurich radicals, for soon after the great debate in 1525 he testified that he had already been imprisoned in the tower four times. Simon Stumpf, pastor of Honng, as we saw, was the first to publicly challenge Zwingli's right to submit religious questions to any other authority than that of the Bible. Space permits the mention here of but two more among a long list of pioneers in the struggle

for freedom of conscience, — Hans Broedli, of Zollikon, whose name after the fashion of that day sometimes appears in its Latinized form, "Paniculum"; and Laurence Hochruetiner of St. Gall, banished several years before from Zurich, who became a radical leader among the working men of his adopted Canton. Balthasar Hubmaier and Ludwig Hetzer, identifying themselves with the Anabaptist movement later on, need no extended notice at this point.

Introduction of Adult Baptism

About this time, whether before or after the debate above mentioned, is not quite certain, but likely after, this small group of devoted disciples of a New Testament church, these reformers of a reformation, took the next step which logically followed their rejection of infant baptism, and which completely separated them from the Zwinglian party and inaugurated the movement known as Anabaptism. They introduced the rite of adult baptism upon confession of faith.

It was at one of the private meetings held for a study of the Bible at which Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock and others were present, that Grebel, who no doubt was recognized as a leader of the group, though not an ordained preacher, baptized Blaurock upon the latter's request, then baptized a number of others present. This act was followed by the breaking of bread. The significance of this event lies in the fact that it marks the complete break with the state-church party, and inaugurated a new church based on the revolutionary principle of religious toleration, and admission to which was based upon confession of faith through adult baptism. The Zwinglians soon spoke of the new party as *Wiedertäufer* (rebaptizers); but the latter, denying that they were rebaptized, since their

first baptism as infants was not valid, rejecting the name, called one another *Brethren*. In south Germany the name *Täufer*, and *Taufgesinnte*, became common; while in Holland, a little later, *Doopsgezinde* was applied to those who held the same views as the Swiss Brethren. In Latin countries, and in England, the term *Anabaptist* came into common use.

This radical departure from the religious practises of the day, it is needless to say, met with most bitter opposition from both the Zurich Council, representing the temporal authorities, and Zwingli in behalf of the state clergy. Both state and church were now determined to secure by legal force what they had been unable to accomplish by moral suasion. To the mandates already on the statute books against all those who preached against infant baptism, new and more stringent ones were passed against such as preached and practised rebaptism. Parents, too, refusing to have their children baptized, were to be fined one silver mark for a first offence, and were to be exiled for repeated disobedience.

It is one thing, however, to abolish religious conviction by law, and quite another to enforce it. The native citizens did not cease their preaching and baptizing; nor did those from out of town immediately take their departure. "We must obey God rather than man," they said. And so it was not long until Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock, Broedli, and others had been cast into prison to remain on a bread and water diet "until they rot." Prison discipline at first must have been rather lax, and collusion with jailors frequent; for the prisoners repeatedly escaped, only to be rearrested as they continued to follow their convictions rather than the orders of the Council. Heine Aeberli complained at the time of his imprisonment in the winter of 1527, that this was the fifth time he had been sent to the tower in less than two years.

Persecution Sets In

Failing to stamp out the rapidly spreading faith of the Brethren by imprisonment, the Council finally decided on March 7, 1526, on more drastic measures. Such leaders as refused to comply with the orders already issued were to be punished by drowning. It was not until a full year later, however, that this threat was actually carried out. The first victim was Felix Mantz. On January 5, 1527, with his hands tied to his knees so as to prevent any possibility of escape from the water, accompanied by a Reformed clergyman who tried to the last to secure a recantation, the unhappy man was rowed from the town hall in Zurich down the Limmat, his mother and brother following along the banks shouting words of encouragement. Just where the Limmat broadens into beautiful Lake Zurich, reflecting the blue sky above and the deep green hills along the shore, just about where the upper bridge now spans the stream, Mantz uttering his last prayer "Father into Thy hands I commit my soul" was tossed overboard and disappeared beneath the waves, the first of a long line of martyrs who preferred to die rather than to give up their faith. On the same day George Blaurock as an alien "stripped to the waist" was whipped out of town.

The fires of persecution were now kindled. Scores of martyrs followed the fate of Mantz still in the same year in many lands, and thousands in the years to come. For a full century and more, not only in Switzerland, but all over south Germany, Austria and Moravia, up and down the Rhine and the upper Danube, wherever they were found, Anabaptists had to pay the extreme price for their faith. They were left to rot in prison, broken on the rack, thrown into rivers and lakes, burned at the stake, beheaded and buried alive.

To all this terrible butchery the organized church whether Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinistic gave its full assent and assistance. The day of religious toleration had not yet arrived. In fact even the dawn was still a hundred years in the future. Zwingli, whose conscience perhaps troubled him somewhat, tried to justify the execution of Mantz on the ground that the charges against him were political rather than religious. But the most casual acquaintance with the facts precludes any such explanation.

That Zwingli was reluctant at first to try extreme measures was to his credit. That he was not by nature disposed to cruelty, and that he acted from what he regarded as worthy motives may well be admitted. But being thoroughly committed to the state church idea, he had no sympathy for the separatism involved in the Anabaptist movement. For several years he tried to win the liberals over to his views by argument and moral suasion, and in the hope of ultimate success he may even have used his influence with the Zurich Council to delay radical action. But when once convinced that the Brethren could not be won over by argument, he was ready to go the limit. From then on he travelled hand in glove with the political authorities in every attempt to root out by the severest measures necessary what he regarded as a menace to the perpetuity of the established ecclesiastical order. He was not a friend of soul liberty.

In these days of religious freedom, when the fullest liberty of conscience is almost taken for granted everywhere,^a it seems almost incredible that there was once a time when men and women were put to death for no other offence than the desire to worship God according to their convictions. The fanatical persecuting zeal of

a. This was written before the present reign of religious intolerance in Europe.

that time must be interpreted in the light of the spirit of the age. Religious toleration was still an unheard of virtue in the days of Luther and Zwingli. For many years to come men and women were still born into compulsory membership in two equally all embracing and powerful social organizations—one civil, the other ecclesiastical, the state and the church. In neither case was there any choice in the matter. Disloyalty to the one was treason, to the other heresy; both punishable by death. The Anabaptist doctrine of an independent church was, therefore, considered dangerously radical. To the privileged classes especially, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as well as temporal rulers, whether bishop, priest or pastor, Catholic or Protestant, who enjoyed comfortable livings from compulsory church taxes, there would be little attraction in a religious system which would abolish the tithe, and substitute for it uncertain voluntary support, and whose advocates refused to attend the prevailing church and observe the customary holy days.

It was but natural, too, that many of the unusual religious practises of the Brethren should be misunderstood and often wilfully misinterpreted. The secret meetings at night, held in out of the way places, were made the basis for charges of immorality; because they refused to have their children baptized, they were called soul murderers by such as believed that baptismal water had the magic power to save; marriage by their own ministers instead of the regular clergy made them adulterers, and branded their children as illegitimate, with no legal rights. To these charges, based on misrepresentations, were added others of a more serious nature. There was no doubt some truth in the contention of both Lutherans and Reformed that in their struggle against the Catholic party the defection of the Anabaptists gave considerable comfort to the common enemy. The various peasants'

revolts raging throughout northern Switzerland and southern Germany just at this time, too, caused the governing authorities to regard with evident suspicion all mass movements among the common people, peaceful and religious, as well as violent and revolutionary. Serious also, from the standpoint of the state, was the refusal of the Brethren to take the oath and hold office, or go to war. All these charges, given wide publicity by the leaders of the state churches, aroused a widespread distrust of the Anabaptist cause wherever it appeared. This is not to be regarded, of course, as a justification of the terrible persecution inflicted by church and state upon these devoted and sincere pioneers of religious liberty, but merely as an attempt to explain it in the light of the spirit of the age.

Spread of the Faith

In the meantime Anabaptism had spread rapidly beyond the confines of the Canton of Zurich. The blood of the martyrs, it is said, is the seed of the church. So it was here. Driven on by the rod of persecution, and urged forward by a burning zeal to share their newly found freedom with their fellows, the leaders of the movement soon carried their story into neighboring lands. Within a short time after the debate of 1525 Grebel had gone to Schaffhausen; Broedli to Hallau; and Reublin to Waldshut, where he had baptized Hubmaier and his whole congregation. Anabaptist centers were soon established in all the important cities of the northern Cantons. In Appenzell, according to one authority, a flourishing congregation of fifteen hundred developed immediately; in St. Gall under the leadership of Laurence Hochreutiner the new faith almost made a clean sweep, nearly emptying the Catholic churches. The people here, says Kessler,

a well known historian of that period, "ran after baptism as the Galatians after circumcision."

Under the leadership of such men as Reublin, Hetzer, Hubmaier and others the movement rapidly flowed over into south Germany, Tyrol, Austria and Moravia. Before 1527 it had entered the regions of the upper Danube and the upper Rhine, and by 1530 down the latter stream into the Netherlands and northwestern Germany, where numerous congregations had been planted in nearly all the large cities. Sebastian Franck, an old chronicler of that day, and not unsympathetic to the new faith says,

"In the year 1526 a new party arose whose leaders and bishops were Hubmaier, Rink, Denk and Hetzer. They spread so rapidly that their teaching soon covered the whole land and they secured a large following and also added to their number many good hearts who were zealous toward God."

The valleys of the Rhine, however, and the upper Danube as far east as Vienna remained the exclusive home of the new movement throughout its entire early history. Just why may be a matter of interesting speculation. Perhaps because within the confines of these valleys were to be found the big cities of commerce, and centers of culture and intellectual life. It was these same regions to which the whole Reformation movement was largely confined; and Anabaptism was merely a liberal wing of that movement. The first Anabaptist congregations were all found in the big cities. It was only after the Brethren were driven under cover by persecution that they forsook the cities, and found refuge in remote country places and mountain fastnesses.

Relation to Waldenses

This rapid and seemingly spontaneous spread of the new party within well defined territorial limits has led

certain students of this question to the conclusion that Anabaptism must have had its origin largely in other evangelical sects which had existed for some time in these same regions, especially the Waldenses. Among other arguments with which the theory of Waldensian origin is supported is the similarity of the two faiths in doctrine and practise, their presence in the same cities and localities, the disappearance of the Waldenses with the coming of the Anabaptists in these same localities, and the similarity among both of certain family names not common elsewhere. That these earlier sects in middle Europe may have had some influence upon the later Anabaptist movement may be granted, but that the latter are merely made over Waldenses can not be maintained. There are too many weak links in the chain of evidence that would trace the one entirely to the other. Among these is the lack of evidence of a direct connection. The first Anabaptist leaders all came directly out of the Catholic church; and with but one or two possible exceptions none seem to have had any Waldensian connections. Waldensian congregations did not completely die out with the coming of the Reformation. Some of them remain to this day. Like the missing link in the theory of evolution, so here, too, the connecting link has not yet been definitely discovered.

Neither is it necessary to account for the similarity of the two faiths in doctrine and practice on the ground of a direct connection. There are other more plausible explanations. Both attempted a literal reproduction of the same model, the Apostolic church as portrayed in the New Testament. Both discarded all the accumulated tradition and authority prevalent in the prevailing state churches not based directly upon a simple literal following of the Bible. The two were alike because they followed the same model. There would have been an Ana-

baptist movement even though the Waldenses had never been heard of. This was just the time, it will be remembered, when the Bible began to be widely read by the common people. Numerous whole and partial editions and reprints were being published all along the Rhine valley during the last quarter of the fifteenth, and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. The fact, too, that the Sermon on the Mount furnished a program of social reform adequate to meet the needs of the oppressed peasants and working men of the day may not have been the least of the factors in the rapid spread of Anabaptism among the masses.

Outlawed by Imperial Decree

The period of rapid growth, however, was of short duration. Church and state united in an effort to root out a movement which if successful would endanger the grip which the privileged classes held upon both the bodies and spirits of the masses. The world was not yet ready for a democracy of either religion or government. Although the authorities never quite succeeded in completely strangling the movement, they did drive it under cover, and in a few years removed all possibility of its having a large popular following. In the northern Swiss Cantons, in south Germany, in Moravia, Tyrol, Austria and wherever the Brethren had carried their faith, bishops, kings and emperors with but few exceptions condemned them, men, women and children to the executioner's block or the burning stake. The imperial Diet of Speier, in 1529, by an edict of outlawry effective throughout the empire, practically shut off the hope of milder treatment on the part of such local rulers as personally favored a more humane policy. By 1530 the rapid advance of the movement was checked; and most of the pioneer leaders, after a few years of devoted service to the cause,

had followed Mantz to a martyr's grave. Grebel, as we saw, had died of the pest in 1526; Sattler, burned at the stake in Rotenburg in 1527; Hubmaier met the same fate in Vienna during this year, as did Hut in Augsburg; in 1529 Blaurock was executed in Innsbruck, and Hetzer beheaded in Constance. But few died a natural death. Execution was frequently preceded by acts of the most horrible cruelty. Typical was the case of Michael Sattler.

Sattler, an ex-monk, while engaged in missionary efforts in south Germany was apprehended and tried in Rotenburg. The court decreed that he "shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall lead him to the place of execution and cut out his tongue, and then throw him upon a wagon, and then tear his body twice with red hot tongs, and after he has been brought within the gate he shall be pinched five times in the same manner." This order was carried out literally, and was followed by burning at the stake. The charges made against Sattler were that he preached against the real presence, infant baptism, worship of Mary and the saints, oath, warfare, extreme unction, communion of one kind, and finally that "he had left the order and married a wife."

Essentials of Anabaptism

The essentials of Anabaptism—an independent, voluntary church composed of adult members, sin-conscious, and admitted into membership by baptism upon confession of faith, have already been referred to. It remains now to discuss a bit more in detail the whole system of beliefs and practises which grew out of these fundamental principles as they developed during the early years of the movement.

Since the act of baptism, shorn of all the magic power to insure eternal salvation with which the Cath-

olic theologians had clothed it, was regarded merely as an initiatory formula signifying admittance into the church, not much weight was attached to the particular form under which it was administered. Although immersion was practised in a few isolated cases, some form of sprinkling or pouring was the prevailing custom. Hans Brubbach, of Zumikon, describing his own baptismal experiences says he was *bespritzt* by Blaurock; Hans Hottinger was admitted into membership with a "hand full of water." Hubmaier administered the rite to his congregation at Waldshut "out of a milk pail"; Fridli Schumacher met Broedli at Hirslanden in south Germany, and was baptized by him at a well. A few leaders seemingly preferred to baptize near the banks of a stream or in running water.

Religion among the Brethren was decidedly a personal matter. Conversions were sudden, resulting from a deep conviction of a sinful life, followed by a strong sense of contrition. The case of Hans Brubbach above mentioned, who before his baptism, "fell on his knees and with bitter tears lamented his sinful state," was typical. The whole movement was thoroughly evangelistic, and characterized by a strong missionary zeal. Meetings were held day and night. Bible reading, exhortation, testimonies, and singing of hymns, often of their own composition, constituted a large part of the worship. Baptism was administered no doubt to new recruits at nearly every meeting, followed usually by the breaking of bread, and occasionally by the washing of feet, after the example of the early apostolic church. Except in a few cases in the beginning like that of Hubmaier at Waldshut, and Hochruetiner at St. Gall, who were able to carry along their entire congregations into the new faith, these meetings had to be held secretly in private houses, or often at night in out of the way places. It was years and in

some cases centuries before the Anabaptists had meeting houses.

In fact the whole movement was an attempt to reproduce as literally as possible the primitive Apostolic church in its original purity and simplicity; and restore Christianity once more to a basis of individual responsibility. The Bible to these prophets of a new world order was the sole source of spiritual authority; the Apostolic church, their model; and the Sermon on the Mount quite literally interpreted their social and religious program. In their respect for the Bible, of course, they were not altogether unique among the Reformation parties. Luther and Zwingli also claimed a Scriptural basis for their innovations. It was rather in their interpretation of what the Scriptures meant than in their respect for them that they differed from the other parties. And yet it must be admitted that the Anabaptists relied more exclusively and more devotedly upon the Bible than did the others as a guide in their search after God. While Lutherans and Reformed claimed the assistance of governing councils and University faculties in their interpretations, and Catholics of a highly organized hierarchy and the church fathers, the Anabaptists insisted that each individual must decide the Bible message for himself. The greatest degree of liberty must be granted the individual conscience in spiritual matters. Anabaptism was the essence of individualism. No other people during the Reformation period knew the contents of the Bible as did the Anabaptists. *Biblicists* they are sometimes called.

This does not mean of course that they were religious anarchists; that they were indifferent to essential fundamental beliefs; that any one of their number might hold any beliefs he pleased, and at the same time remain within their fellowship. They soon accumulated a well defined body of beliefs and practices agreed upon by

congregations and conferences to which they insisted all members of the group must subscribe, or remove themselves from the fellowship of the body. But they did not believe in the use of physical force to bring about uniformity. One was free to hold any belief he wished; but in so doing he must seek religious fellowship among those likeminded. In church government Anabaptists were both congregational and democratic.

Neither did they favor a specially trained and supported ministry. Like the missionaries in the primitive church, these were to live by the labor of their own hands. The ministry was to be regarded as a labor of love. "Hirelings" was a term often applied to the state clergy. Benefices and fat livings were as frequently criticised as any other practise among the established institutions. Ministers were chosen by the congregation from among their own number, often by lot. The first leaders of course were highly trained men, converts for the most part from the Catholic priesthood or University graduates. But after these had been killed off, and the Brethren had been driven under cover, there were few trained leaders among them. As a result their theology from this on tended to become decidedly Biblical, but never philosophical.

Among the fundamental Anabaptist doctrines few led to more trouble with the governmental authorities than that of non-resistance. Love, the Brethren said, must be the basis of all social relations. "Love thine enemies," and "Resist not evil" were injunctions as binding as any others in the New Testament and must be taken literally. This principle they tried to follow in all their individual as well as group relationships, even though its application might bring them into conflict with the ruling authorities occasionally. War they refused to sanction, and military service they rejected as un-

Christian. Instead of appearing in public places, as was the custom of the time, with daggers in their belts, they wore short wooden staves instead.

In Switzerland, where military service was considered more or less obligatory at the time, and the letting of mercenary soldiers an important source of public revenue, this refusal to bear arms became one of the serious charges against them on the part of the temporal rulers. In other countries, however, where universal service was not demanded, the refusal to go to war was not the leading cause of persecution.

The attitude toward the magistrate's office also was a continual source of misunderstanding. According to Anabaptist theory no Christian could hold a political office, although it was his duty to give his government implicit obedience insofar as it did not conflict with his conscience. This duty rested not only on the doctrine of non-resistance, but upon positive New Testament injunction as well, the order to be obedient to the civil authorities. By the same authority the Christian is enjoined to pray for his rulers. But with prayer and obedience it was thought all obligation ended. Not that government is not necessary; it is, but not for the Christian. There are two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the World. In the worldly kingdom, which is essentially evil, government is necessary for the purpose of protecting the good and punishing the evil. It is the duty of the worldly government, therefore, to protect the Christian; but in the kingdom of God force is not necessary. Rather a naïve and somewhat selfish political philosophy one is inclined to think in this day of religious liberty, and political democracy; but perfectly inevitable and logical in that day of intolerance and union of state and church. If the magistracy must enforce religious uniformity, and burn men at the stake for their

religious beliefs, then of course no Christian, according to the Anabaptist standard, who believed in absolute soul liberty, could consistently hold office. But the Scriptures enjoin obedience to civil authority. The only possible escape from this dilemma, if one wished to reconcile his heavenly with his earthly citizenship, was that pointed out by the Anabaptist view above mentioned. The strong sense of other worldliness which characterized the whole life of the Anabaptists, the conviction that they were not of this world, aroused and intensified by the terrible persecutions which they suffered, no doubt greatly strengthened this feeling that their citizenship was rather a heavenly than an earthly one.

Their refusal to take an oath, too, was generally construed as an act of rebellion against the temporal government. But in reality it had no such meaning among the Anabaptists. Although its rejection for any reason whatsoever may have been perfectly in keeping with their attitude toward the magistracy, yet opposition was primarily based on a literal interpretation of the injunction "Swear not at all."

Religion, pure and undefiled, to the Anabaptists was not merely a set of dogmas, but a life. It must function in improved conduct. It is a fact well known among church historians that moral conditions among the people were not immediately bettered by the early reformers; in fact as respect for Catholic doctrines declined, and the discipline of the church grew correspondingly more lax, the general moral standards of the time were lowered rather than raised among the masses. A state church with a compulsory membership, and little personal discipline beyond the insistence upon orthodox beliefs at best was not conducive to an improvement in morality.

The Brethren on the other hand insisted from the start that the new faith must bear fruit in purer living.

Conrad Grebel informed an early applicant for baptism that church membership required of him that he be free from adultery, gambling, drunkenness, usury, and other vices of the day. Ludwig Hetzer undoubtedly wrote the first prohibition treatise of modern times in his tract *Evangelical Cups*. Discipline against an occasional offender was rigidly enforced among the Brethren. According to the *Shleithem* articles of 1527, the earliest Anabaptist confession on record, any member having fallen into gross sin, and refusing to repent after having been admonished according to Matthew 18, was to be expelled from membership. Kessler describing the daily life of the Swiss Brethren says of them —

“Their daily walk and deportment appears to be upright, godly and entirely blameless. They shun costly clothes, avoid excessive eating and drinking, wear coarse clothing, and broad felt hats. They go about humbly, without weapons, neither swords nor pikes, but with a short bread knife. They seem much more concerned about living an upright life than the Papists.”

The Grand Duke of Hesse, speaking a little later of the Anabaptists of middle Germany declared —

“I see more upright living among those that are called sects than among the Lutherans.”

Both of these testimonials come from defenders of the state churches. Even their bitterest enemies could find no fault with their conduct except to call them “Wolves in sheep’s clothing,” and ascribe their piety and even the courage and fortitude with which they met death to the Devil.¹ In fact Zwingli, realizing that

1 George Wizel wrote in 1531: “Whoever speaks against the wicked customs of the times and urges the need of a Christian life must be called an Anabaptist; many a one knows not how to clear himself of this suspicion except by frequent drinking bouts. For your evangelical liberty has resulted in this—that he who earnestly seeks to mend his life is considered an Anabaptist.” Quoted in John Horsch, *Menno Simons*, page 114.

the immorality found among some of the state clergy contributed not a little to the growth of Anabaptism, instituted a reform movement among his own clergy for more consistent living. In a synodal meeting held in Zurich in 1528 one pastor was accused by his congregation of swearing, drinking and gambling; another was convicted of stealing. The pastor at Steinmaur was removed for adultery. The one at Bulach, who was accused of neglecting his pastoral duties for worldly gain, was ordered to pursue a further course of study at Zurich. Among frequent charges brought against various clergymen were wife beating, frequenting of taverns, gambling and excessive drinking, fighting, pride and general neglect of duty. Unquestionably the high standards of personal sobriety and integrity maintained by the Anabaptists exerted a wholesome influence upon the personal conduct of both the clergy and laymen of the state churches among whom they lived.

In the matter of private property neither the Swiss Brethren nor their fellow Anabaptists elsewhere, with the exception of the Moravian Hutterites were communists, as was often charged against them. Benefices and fat livings of course held by the clergy, they decidedly opposed; but they did not object to private possessions of the laity. Compassion for the less fortunate, however, must constrain the possessor of an ample store of worldly goods to share his surplus liberally with the needy in case of distress. The Christian, after all, is merely a steward of his possessions, they said. But this is far from communism.

Due, as already stated, to the early passing of trained leaders, Anabaptist doctrines lacked a speculative basis, and paid slight regard to the prevailing theologies of the day. With such subtle questions as the freedom of the will, the mysteries of the incarnation, and the relation

of the human to the divine in the nature of Jesus, they concerned themselves little. The Lord's Supper was a mere symbol, and not a sacrament in the sense in which that term was used by the churches believing in the real presence, clothed with magic power to save irrespective of the faith of the recipient. The ceremonial theory of baptism has been mentioned elsewhere. Anabaptist doctrines were inclined to be Scriptural though not theologically speculative.

From the political and economic revolutionary movements, and peasant revolts then sweeping over Switzerland and south Germany the Swiss Brethren at least, whatever might be said of other parties that went under the name of Anabaptist, remained remarkably free. Although they incorporated in their living the principles of fair dealing and economic justice taught in the Sermon on the Mount, they remained almost exclusively a religious party, disentangled from all the social and economic currents of the time. Their non-resistant principles forbade any fellowship with a movement that might require the use of force in gaining its objective, laudable though the goal might be. Their enemies accused them, nevertheless, of being followers of Thomas Münzer, one of the leaders of the Peasants' revolt of 1524. This charge among later writers, rested largely upon a letter written to the latter by Grebel and his associates in the year 1524, but before the battle of Frankenhausen; and upon an alleged visit made by Münzer to northern Switzerland the same year. There is no evidence, however, in the above letter nor in the later developments of the Swiss movement that the Brethren were in any way influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the German radical. In fact in the letter mentioned, Grebel specifically warns Münzer against adopting a revolutionary policy, being especially opposed to the use of violence of any kind.

THE ZWICKAU PROPHETS

This charge perhaps warrants a further reference here to the movement inaugurated by Münzer and his associates who are usually spoken of as the *Zwickau Prophets*, and are frequently classed, though improperly so, with the Anabaptists.

The Zwickau Prophets began their work in Saxony about the time the Swiss Brethren arose in Switzerland. Heinrich Bullinger, a contemporary writer, in speaking of these events says,

"About the year 1521 or 1522 there arose in Saxony a number of restless spirits among whom Nicholas Storch was one of the most influential, who went about saying that God revealed Himself to them through dreams and visions, that there must be a new world in which only righteousness shall prevail. Therefore all Godless people must be destroyed from the earth and all Godless princes and lords. They called all people Godless who did not take part with them. At first they kept these matters secret. From this same school came Thomas Münzer, who also had his followers, Pfeiffer, Rink, and many others. This Münzer boasted that God had revealed Himself to him. All his conversation and writing was bitter against the preachers and also the magistrates."

Nicholas Storch was a weaver, and although a layman, well versed in the Bible. Münzer, speaking of his ability along this line, declared that he knew the Scriptures better than any priest. Of his religious doctrines we know little, except that he is thought to have imbibed them from the Bohemian Picards. He rejected infant baptism, though there is no evidence that he practised rebaptism. He believed in communism, and was said to hold Anabaptist views on warfare and the magistracy. He was strongly influenced by visions and the leading

of the inner light. An angel appeared before him one night, he said, and informed him that the archangel Gabriel would place him upon a throne when the kingdom of the elect would be established and all unbelievers would be destroyed. By 1521 he had established a separate organization which included many of his fellow weavers and others of the laboring people in Saxony. After the fashion of the primitive church, twelve apostles and seventy evangelists, it was reported, were sent out by him to spread his teaching.^{1a}

Thomas Münzer, born about 1490, was a restless fiery spirit who had taken up the work of reform even before Luther, having formed a conspiracy against the bishop of Magdeburg in 1513. After some years of wandering, he settled down at Zwickau as a Lutheran pastor with the full approval of Luther himself. It was here that he met Storch with whom he began an attack upon the avarice and corruption of the monks and priests, ending with a denunciation of many of the practises of the new as well as the old church. The result was exile for both of them. Two years later Münzer turned up at Alstaedt where he gathered together a large congregation before whom he denounced both state churches as well as the temporal government; and began a crusade against pictures, statues, altars and even church buildings on the plea that they were not necessary for true worship. He, too, was a follower of the inner light. "One might read ten thousand Bibles" he said, "and yet it would not help him." He believed himself to be God's special prophet, and like many of the enthusiasts of his day, he pretended to make the primitive church, together with certain teachings of the Old Testament, the basis of his new sys-

1a. John Horsch says he finds no trace in the records anywhere of these supposed evangelists.

tem. Infant baptism he rejected as useless, though he never practised rebaptism.

With his radical religious views he preached revolutionary political doctrines. The present governments he said must soon be destroyed,

“Those princes who would not repent and would not accept the Gospel must even as the Catholic ecclesiastics be destroyed with fire and sword. They stand not only against the true faith, but also against the natural rights of man. Consequently they must be strangled like dogs.”

Rulers must govern for the good of the people, and are accountable to them, he said. He seemed to favor communism, and a levelling of all class distinctions. As a result of these views Münzer was exiled from Alstaedt by Duke George of Saxony, never to return. For a time he hovered about Mühlhausen and other points in south Germany, and finally in 1524, as already noted, he made a tour through northern Switzerland, coming into brief contact with Hubmaier and perhaps several other leaders of the liberal reform movement. He warmly sympathized with the peasants of these regions in their fight against the economic and social burdens to which the church and the land tenure systems of the time subjected them; and when the Peasants Revolt broke out in south Germany, Münzer became one of the leaders of the movement. He was captured in the battle of Frankenhausen with a number of others and was shortly afterward executed.

That the Zwickau prophets were not Anabaptists, especially not of the peaceful, non-resistant Swiss Brethren type, is apparent, and needs no further proof than a mere recital of their violent, revolutionary political as well as religious views. Of spiritual kinship there was none between the two parties, and they should not be confused.

SOUTH GERMANY

As already noted, the Swiss Brethren, when driven out of their native Cantons, carried their faith almost from the start across the border into south Germany. Within a few years good sized congregations had been established in all the larger cities throughout Bavaria, Baden, Wurttemberg, the Palatinate, Alsace, and as far north as Thuringia and Saxony. The free imperial cities especially, centers of an active commercial life, where there was little governmental interference from local princes and kings, were favorable to the rapid growth of the new cause. One of the earliest and largest of these congregations was located at Augsburg.

Augsburg at this time was a city of some fifteen thousand, the leading financial and commercial center of all south Germany. It espoused the Reformation cause quite early, and was quite slow to choose between the Lutheran and Zwinglian parties. Just when Anabaptism made its first appearance here is not known exactly; but soon the city became a favorite meeting place for all the leaders of the movement throughout these regions. The first of the later prominent leaders to pass through was Hubmaier, who in the summer of 1526, while on his way from Switzerland to Moravia, stopped long enough to baptize Hans Denk, who in turn became not only the organizer of the Augsburg congregation, but the greatest of all the south German Anabaptists. Since the history of any movement is largely the life story of a few individuals, a short biographical sketch of this "Anabaptist Apollo" may not be out of place at this point.

Hans Denk

Hans Denk, born in Bavaria about 1495, occupies an important place among the founders of German Anabap-

tism. Not much is known of his early life before 1523, when we find him in Basel as a University student and printer, a friend of Oecolampadius, and other Reformation leaders. Through his friend he received the appointment of rector of a school at Nuremburg at the age of 28. Here he remained only two years; for, allying himself with a group of radical reformers, who advocated many doctrines similar to those held by the Swiss Brethren, he was exiled by Osiander, the head of the Lutheran party in that city. At St. Gall, whither he fled, he had his first contact with the Anabaptists, though he did not join them at that time. It was in Augsburg, where he lived from September of 1525 to October of the following year, that he was baptized by Hubmaeir as we have already seen. Here he soon built up a large congregation, and won over a number of men of local influence, including Eitel Hans Langenmantel, member of a prominent family, and after Denk, the principal leader of the Augsburg group. Because of his activities in behalf of his faith, and influence among the masses, Denk was ordered into exile by both the city and ecclesiastical authorities. We next find him in Strasburg, where dissenters were still tolerated. Here he met such Anabaptists as Sattler and Hetzer, and such liberal evangelical thinkers as Sebastian Franck and Casper Schwenkfeld, as well as such tolerant state church reformers as Martin Butzer and Wolfgang Capito, by all of whom he was held in the highest esteem during his short stay in this city. Here he had hoped to retire from the public eye; and in collaboration with Hetzer, also a good Hebraist, to devote himself to a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. But the fight against the Anabaptists was so bitter everywhere that he could not altogether evade the responsibilities of defending their cause. And so it was only after spending some time in missionary work in the general region of Strasburg—

Worms, Landau, and Bergzabern, that he was still able to finish his Old Testament translation which became so popular that ultimately it went through sixteen editions. In 1527 we find him in Augsburg again as chairman of the Martyrs synod. But his days were already numbered. Soon after this he returned to Basel, where, ill and heartbroken, driven from one city to another, he begged his old teacher, Oecolampadius, for permission to end his days in the city where he had begun his career some years before. He died a few months later of the pest, not yet thirty-two years old.

Hans Denk was one of the gentlest spirits of the Anabaptist group; and one of the noblest characters of the whole Reformation movement. A fine scholar, of a modest and retiring disposition, with little taste for religious controversy, he was yet destined, almost in spite of himself, to become through his voluminous writings, one of the chief defenders of the Anabaptist cause. As a disciple of Johan Tauler, he was inclined toward mysticism. Although orthodox on most of the fundamentals of his adopted faith, yet he laid less stress than did most of his brethren on the worth and necessity of mere outward symbols and religious ceremonies. Although he was baptized, and rebaptized others, it is said that in his later days he regretted the emphasis given to this as well as other ceremonial rites.

Like George Fox of a later period, he believed strongly in direct revelation through the voice of God in the hearts of men as a trustworthy means of finding God. The Bible alone is not sufficient. Faith could not be acquired by merely reading a book, he said. Like Francis of Assisi, whom he resembled in many respects, he, too, was so dominated by the idea of the love of God that in a passage in one of his books he expressed the doubt whether a loving God would condemn any one,

even a confirmed sinner, to eternal punishment. He was not a strong believer in either Luther's doctrine of total depravity or election. Each individual, he said, had the greatest freedom of will in making his choice. Instead of discussing such questions as baptism, the Lord's supper, the incarnation, and similar doctrines so dear to the hearts of the controversialists of that day, Denk wrote voluminously on the place in religious experience of love, faith, and the law of God.

Denk's mysticism, needless to say, capable of many interpretations, was often bitterly criticized by those not his friends. He was charged with all sorts of heresies—the universal salvation of all, even the Devil; the denial of the trinity; and that sin was but an empty illusion. But a sympathetic reader of his works finds little ground for these charges, though one could hardly pronounce him an orthodox fundamentalist in all his theological views. He exerted great influence both through his writings and by personal contact upon his co-laborers; and no doubt his gentle mysticism served as a wholesome corrective for the formal literalism of his friend Michael Sattler, and the fanaticism of his disciple whom he baptized—Hans Hut. That Denk was a man of fine personality and rare charm is evident. Bader calls him the “renowned Hans Denk”; Vadian speaks of him as “a most gifted youth”; Butzer refers to him as “the Anabaptist pope,” and Haller as the “Anabaptist Apollo.”

Ludwig Hetzer

Associated with Denk both in Augsburg and especially in Strasburg was Ludwig Hetzer, whom we already saw as a pioneer Anabaptist in south Germany soon after his expulsion from Zurich in 1525. The two were associated not only in a partnership in the translation of portions of the Old Testament, but in all their efforts in

behalf of the Anabaptist cause. Both were present at the Martyrs synod; but after that Hetzer's whereabouts is not so well known. He evidently was active though, for in a report from Nuremberg, January 1, 1528, he appears as "Ludwig Hetzer, an erect, lean, pale fellow, who, here in our town baptized many secretly." He was arrested in Constance the next year and was beheaded on a charge of immorality. This charge may have been a mere pretence to cover the real cause of his execution, that of being an Anabaptist. Such misrepresentations were frequent. Hetzer wrote a number of tracts on doctrinal and practical subjects, including as noted elsewhere a treatise on prohibition, *Evangelical Cups*. In this treatise Hetzer recommends as a cure for the excessive drinking of the day total abstinence. He does not favor moderate drinking even. "If one does not vomit at the table," he says, "he is considered as drinking moderately, even though he may have drunk three measures of wine." The true Christian can not call that evangelical which is antagonistic to the gospel, he continues.

The Martyr's Synod

The "Martyr's" synod, held in Augsburg in 1527, attended by nearly all of the leaders of the region, and so called because so many of these leaders met a martyr's fate soon after, was called for the purpose of ironing out certain differences of opinion that had arisen among the Brethren of south Germany and the Austrias due to the fanatical millenarian views of Hans Hut, one of Denk's converts; and to assign missionaries to various fields of labor in central Europe. This meeting marked the crest of Anabaptist prosperity in Augsburg. The congregation at the time numbered above one thousand. Soon after this the city authorities, urged on by the state church hierarchy under the local direction of Urban Rhegius,

as well as by imperial decree, and the example of other cities and principalities, decided upon a policy of extermination of all sects. The Brethren must renounce their faith, and their leaders were ordered under arrest. Many went into exile. By 1529, it was said, there were more than one hundred Augsburg Anabaptists in Strasburg alone, where liberty of conscience was still given some consideration. Among several others, Hut decided to remain. He was cast into prison soon after the big meeting, where he died from accidental burns. But even though dead, he was tried as a heretic, condemned and officially burned, or rather reburned at the stake. Langenmantel, because he was a native of the city, and because he was of a prominent family, was permitted to go into exile; but he, too, the next year suffered the death of a martyr. By 1530 there were few Anabaptists left in the city, though they were still to be found in seclusion in the regions around about.

Strasburg

Equally important as an early Anabaptist center was the free city of Strasburg, seat of culture, and home of an active evangelical life during the late medieval age. Zwinglianism and Lutheranism were still contending for supremacy at the time, though a little later the former won. Capito and Butzer, the two religious leaders of the city, both hesitated long before making their final choice in the matter. The former, especially, at first was quite sympathetic toward the dissenters; he even doubted the validity of infant baptism himself for a time, though, like Zwingli, he never became a separatist. Under these favorable conditions Strasburg remained an asylum for the persecuted sects during the late twenties at a time when they were being sent into exile and to the stake almost everywhere else.

A small circle of Swiss exiles banded themselves together as early as 1525. Here Hubmaier had his first treatise on baptism published, though it is not likely that he actively engaged in the spreading of his views at this time. Wilhelm Reublin, who arrived in the spring of 1526, is said to have been the first Anabaptist with whom Capito came into personal contact. Beginning with this latter year, however, and continuing for some years after, most of the prominent Anabaptists—Denk, Hetzer, Sattler, Reublin, Gross, Marbeck, Hoffman—all made visits at one time or another for shorter or longer periods to the city on the Rhine. Sattler and Hetzer even lived in the home of Capito for a time. Even after the growing intolerance of the age, and imperial edicts demanded that the Anabaptist movement be suppressed, the Strasburg authorities hesitated to use the harsh means to secure this end that were common elsewhere. Both Capito and Butzer favored moderate treatment as long as possible, hoping that argument and mild treatment would be a more effective means of winning back the erring than banishment and the stake. As late as 1536 the city council advised that those accused of membership in the sect be put to some useful public work, rather than to be cast into prison. Even though banishment was resorted to finally, the death penalty seemingly was never imposed in Strasburg for religious dissent. All through the sixteenth century, too, the city was a favorite meeting place for Anabaptist and Mennonite general councils.

Michael Sattler

Among the influential Strasburg leaders who have not already been given extended notice elsewhere must be included Michael Sattler, a south German ex-monk who had joined the Brethren in Zurich from whence he had come to Strasburg as an exile. His brief service in

behalf of his faith like that of most of his fellow laborers was packed full of intense activity and devoted self sacrifice. He is credited with being the author of the first Anabaptist confession of faith on record, the Schleithem confession of 1527. It was during this year, too, that, while engaged in missionary work along the lower Neckar, he was apprehended in a little village called Horb, and later executed in Rothenburg with horrible torture. The story of his execution told elsewhere in this chapter, is recorded in the Martry's Mirror. He evidently was a man of strong convictions and a firm advocate of a rather ritualistic interpretation of the New Testament practises. He did not hesitate to differ vigorously with Denk's mysticism, though he did not refuse to work with Denk in behalf of their common cause. Sattler must have been a man of unusual piety and humility. Even Butzer, the less tolerant of the two Strasburg reformers, refers to him as a "martyr in Christ; even though he was a leader among the Anabaptists, he was much more reasonable and honorable than some of the rest."

Pilgram Marbeck

Pilgram Marbeck also should be given brief notice here as a rather unusual man. Originally a monk, he became an Anabaptist in Tyrol where as a mining engineer he held an important government position. Forced to leave his Tyrolean home presumably because of persecution, he appeared among the Brethren first in Augsburg in 1527, then in Strasburg the following year. In the latter city he won the favor of the authorities because of his aid in building a difficult engineering project which proved of great benefit to the public. It was for this reason no doubt that he was dealt with more generously than most Anabaptists; for he remained an ardent Anabaptist to the end. He helped to organize new communities, and

wrote extensively in behalf of his beliefs. His most important treatise was a general dissertation on baptism, the magistracy, the Supper and other distinctive Anabaptist doctrines written in 1542. It was in reply to this book that Schwenkfeld wrote his *Judicium* which led to a series of controversies, in which neither did himself credit. According to Butzer, Marbeck and his wife were "pious people living a blameless life." "But," adds Butzer, "that is just the decoy bird with which Satan even in the days of the Apostles allured the innocent to their death." In 1532 after a public debate with Butzer, Marbeck was banished from Strasburg by order of the city council. He went to Ulm; and from this time until his death in 1546, he remained the guiding spirit among the scattered Anabaptist communities all along the valley of the upper Nekar. He was one of the very few of the pioneer leaders to escape martyrdom.

Melchior Hoffman visited Strasburg long enough in 1529 to gain some followers for his unusual views; but since his chief field of labor was confined to the regions along the lower Rhine, the story of his activities is told in a later section of this chapter.

Casper Schwenkfeld and Sebastian Franck, two other well known Strasburg dissenters, and tolerant of other religious views, were in thorough agreement in many points with the Anabaptists; but they never affiliated with the latter, and can not be classed as such.

Among other cities in which Anabaptism struck its roots early was Nuremburg, a quaint old center of learning, full of evangelical life, with its school of heretical painters under the famous Albert Duerer who almost espoused Anabaptist doctrines before the movement had started in Zurich. It was here that Denk lived before

he became a member of the party, and where he met many of his faith afterwards.

Regensburg, or Ratisbon, also harbored a congregation by 1527. Hetzer, Hut, Denk, and Hubmaier all made this a frequent stopping place during the few years of their active service. This city, too, followed a rather mild policy toward dissenters; much milder than the surrounding regions which were directly under the rule of the Bavarian duke.

In fact in all the cities of south Germany—Ulm, Munich, Stuttgart, Passau, wherever the impulses of the Reformation were felt, and in some places where they were not, Anabaptist groups were likely to appear and flourish for a time when the movement was at its peak.

MIDDLE GERMANY

There was a vigorous growth of the new doctrines in middle Germany, too, in the general region of Fulda, Erfurt, Halberstadt and Mühlhausen,—in *Hesse*, *Francia*, *Saxony* and *Thuringia*. These were just the regions, it will be remembered, where the Zwickau Prophets labored, and where the Peasant's Revolt broke out in 1524, and collapsed so ingloriously the following year. It was perhaps for this reason largely that the Anabaptist movement here developed a character of its own, somewhat apart from that of other localities already mentioned. It was tinged much more than elsewhere with a spirit of millenarianism. Although quite orthodox and sound on such fundamental doctrines as believers baptism, non-resistance, non-participation in government, and insistence upon living a life of strict piety and sobriety, the Anabaptists here were much more keenly expectant than were their more sober minded brethren in other parts of the early inauguration of the kingdom of the

elect through some great cataclysm. This chiliastic tone of the movement in middle Germany was no doubt partly due to the lingering influence in this area of Thomas Muenzer and his followers, but also in no small degree to the unhealthy millenarian ideas of a new leader, Johannes Hut, who for a time had this part of Germany all to himself as a field of labor.

Hans Hut

Hans Hut, a native Franconian, and sacristan to the knight Hans von Bibra, first attracted local attention when, about the time of the agitation by the Zwickau prophets, he was imprisoned for refusing to baptize his child. We next hear of him in Nuremberg, where he learned the trade of book binder. He evidently was interested quite early in religious questions, and became a sort of colporteur; for, when captured with other peasants after the battle of Frankenhausen, he secured his release on the plea that he had accompanied the band of armed peasants not as a fighter but as a bookseller. The Nuremberg council several years later, in describing him to the court officials who were on his trail, speaks of him as a book peddler "in person a tall, lean, boorish sort of fellow, with a little pale, yellow beard, and a closely cropped head. His clothes consist of a grey riding jacket, and sometimes black, and a wide brimmed grey hat."

He soon added the profession of a sort of lay preacher to that of book seller, and went about preaching the gospel as he understood it. He labored without salary, supporting himself by his book trade and carpentering. He was a man without education in the schools, but thoroughly familiar with the text of the Bible. Like many of the ignorant teachers of his day, he was especially fascinated with the prophecies of Daniel and the

ecstatic visions of Revelations. He shared with Muenzer the belief in an early coming of the millenium. Every detail in the inauguration of the cataclysmic kingdom was carefully worked out by him. In one of his tracts published on the subject he says —

“shortly before the end of the age, all the godless will be destroyed, and that by true Christians; if the number of Christians shall be sufficient, they will go from Germany to Switzerland, or Hungary. They will pay no attention to lords and princes. When some thousands of them shall have assembled they shall exchange their goods for money so that they may have enough of food; then, they shall wait until the Turk comes. If the Turk fails to destroy the princes, monks, priests, nobles and knights they then will be stricken down by the little company of true Christians. But if the godless shall march against the Turks, then the true Christians shall remain at home, but if many of the princes and lords remain at home too, and do not march against the Turks, they shall be struck down a short time afterwards. Then it will come to pass that the true Christians will have no one but God alone, who will then be and remain their lord.” (1.b.)

This near justification by Hut of the use of force by the Christians themselves in helping to usher in the kingdom of the elect was full of danger to the whole Anabaptist cause. Hut himself was not a revolutionist so far as is known, and took no part in any attempt at violence. He still hoped that the Turk would relieve the Christians of the necessity of preparing the world for the elect by the destruction of the wicked. But his teaching that in case the Turks failed, then the Christians themselves might undertake the task at the appointed time, led to disastrous consequences later on when under more radical leaders the conviction dawned upon them that this appointed time for participation had actually arrived.

1.b. For an account of Hut's activities in Middle Germany see Paul Wappler: *Die Taufbewegung in Thuringen*.

The fear of the Turk, by the way, played an important role, not only in the apocalyptic ideals of the Anabaptists of middle and northwestern Germany, but in the whole Reformation movement as well. The belief in the early coming of Christ on the earth was by no means confined to the fanatics of the time. Luther himself held that view. And it was not strange that the Turks should be regarded as the probable means of ushering in the new era; for the Turkish fear was a real fear throughout middle Europe during these times. For years they had been hovering on the eastern frontier threatening to destroy Christian Europe, and in 1527 and several times later had actually laid siege to Vienna. In fact it was the necessity of keeping back the Turks that accounted for Emperor Charles' inability to suppress the Lutheran movement during the lifetime of Luther himself, the most critical years of its history.

All of these radical views of Hut's had been well developed while he was still a Lutheran; for he did not become an Anabaptist, as noted elsewhere, until the summer of 1526. Unfortunately his baptism seemingly did not greatly modify his millenarian theories, though his contact with the mild spirited Denk at Augsburg, and the conservative Hubmaier at Nikolsburg during the following year, had a sobering influence upon him. He was destined to serve his adopted faith for hardly more than a year. But that brief period was packed full of hectic activity and devoted service. He was a fiery, eloquent speaker, especially popular with the laboring men; and travelled extensively and continually as an itinerant preacher, baptizing many throughout Tyrol, Austria, Moravia, where he clashed with Hubmaier, and was imprisoned by a fellow Anabaptist, Leonhard von Liechtenstein, and finally through middle Germany where he baptized converts by the hundreds, and where, as we

saw, he was the outstanding and almost sole leader of the entire movement for that brief period. He almost literally baptized on the run evidently. Many of his converts hardly remembered his name. While the reluctance which these often showed when hailed before court tribunals to give testimony to their faith, to remember their baptizer by any other name than merely "Hans," may have been due to the desire to shield him from the authorities, yet it is entirely likely that they had never known him by any other. Often the restless preacher would come into a house under cover of night, deliver his message, perhaps baptize the whole household on the spur of the moment, and before morning leave for parts unknown seeking refuge and other converts, hardly leaving behind him even his full name.

Hut was present at the Martyrs synod in Augsburg in 1527, where he was induced to renounce some of his radical theories. But it was already too late for him to undo the damage he had done to the cause; for soon after this he was cast into prison in this city, and was accidentally burned to death in his prison cell.

Among other influential leaders besides Hans Hut, all of whom played a minor role here, however, must be mentioned Melchior Rink, sometimes confused by contemporary writers with Melchior Hoffman, Hans Romer, and Christopher Kuerschner.

Chiliastic Tendencies

Under such leadership it is small wonder that the whole Anabaptist movement of middle Germany was permeated with a strong chiliastic spirit. Most of the Anabaptists believed with Hut that the wicked would be destroyed and the new era would be ushered in by an overwhelming victory of the Turks over the armies

of the worldly forces. Nuremberg, it was quite generally agreed, would be the scene of the final battle. Not all, however, were convinced that the Turks would be the chosen agents for ending the old order. One man at least, drawing heavily no doubt from the history of the Israelites whose beliefs were tested at an inquisitorial court, gave it as his opinion that the old dispensation would be wound up by a plague of grasshoppers.

That many of the Anabaptists of this region were not unfamiliar with the arguments used by both the peasants of Germany and those of other countries in their struggle against economic oppression is shown by the fact that they knew the literature of that struggle. More than once a victim of the inquisitorial courts in the course of the trial was heard to quote the couplet well known among the English peasants in their revolts in the thirteenth century —

*"Da Adam reute, und Eva Span
Wer war die Zeit ein Edelman."*

Thanks to the researches of Dr. Wappler in this particular field of history, it is possible to reproduce many of the details of the distinctive religious practises common among the Anabaptists of this area. Like their brethren generally in other sections, they stressed sobriety and simplicity in all the activities of life, disapproving especially of excessive eating and drinking, dancing, gambling, and all forms of riotous living. Their clothes were plain and simple, usually of a dark and somber color. True to their non-resistant principles, they substituted for the sword usually worn on public occasions, a short wooden staff, similar to that worn by the Swiss Brethren. This often served as a special mark of identification by which their enemies singled them out in times of persecution. A common password among them was their usual

form of greeting—*Der Friede des Herrn sei mit Dir* or *Gott gruesz dich in dem Herrn*, and the rejoinder *Ich danke Dir in dem Herrn* or simply *Amen*.

In their religious practises they retained some of undoubted Catholic origin, unconsciously perhaps. In administering the act of baptism the form of a cross was often made on the forehead of the candidate, as the one who administered the rite uttered the formula "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." For a reason not known, the phrase in the Lord's prayer "Give us our daily bread" was generally replaced by *das Wahrhaftige Brot, dein ewiges Wort gib uns Heute*. They addressed each other as brother and sister, applying these terms to one another irrespective of relationship—brother, sister, father, mother, son or daughter; often they spoke of themselves as the "Beloved of God."

Did Not Escape Persecution

The Anabaptists of middle and south Germany, of course, did not escape persecution; although Luther himself was at first slow to sanction any interference on the part of the civil authorities in the realm of spiritual freedom. Fearing, no doubt, the effect of intolerance upon the freedom of his own followers in such states as were still dominantly Catholic, he for a time advocated a spirit of toleration in matters of religious belief almost as broad as that of the Anabaptists themselves. But not long. As the danger to his own followers receded, and his impatience with those who differed with him increased, he grew less inclined to tolerate dissent. By 1527 he still suggested that the civil authority had no right to interfere in matters of religious conviction; but in the same breath invalidated all the benefits that might accrue from this fine spirit by an ingenious interpretation of the right to

enforce the law against blasphemy and sedition. Blasphemy he soon interpreted as false teaching; and false teaching was any teaching contrary to the doctrines of Lutheranism. By 1530 he no longer needed to indulge in even this sort of casuistry. He was ready to admit that Anabaptism must be destroyed, and was willing to try any means, no matter how drastic, necessary to accomplish that end. Most of the other Lutheran theologians followed him in this policy.

But if the theologians were a bit slow in making up their minds to use extreme measures, the temporal authorities were not. Almost from the start in most of the lay as well as ecclesiastical states of middle Europe the Anabaptists were made to feel the iron hand of persecution. The imperial edict issued at the Diet of Speier on April 23, 1529 ordering all Anabaptists, men and women, in all the states of the empire to be destroyed with fire and sword has already been mentioned.

Among the local rulers who practised unusual harsh measures was the Elector of Saxony, in Luther's own state, who not only put men and women to death for their faith in his own duchy but urgently insisted that his neighboring princes do likewise. The Catholic princes were the most relentless of all. In the Suabian League four companies of horsemen of one hundred each scoured the territory under their jurisdiction, literally driving the Anabaptists out of the land. The Duke of Bavaria reached the limit of perfidy and cruelty perhaps in the cold blooded order that such as recanted were to be beheaded, while those who did not were to be burned at the stake. Only Philip of Hesse, of the Reformed party, refused to take extreme measures. In spite of the pressure brought to bear upon him by the Elector of Saxony and the edict of Speier, he could still boast in 1530 that up to that time he had not yet put any one to death in his

duchy because of his religious faith. The Count of the Palatinate, too, Ludwig V, although a Catholic, up to the time of the Diet of Speier refused to resort to harsh means; but later rulers followed the intolerant spirit of the day.

Anabaptism died hard. The Brethren stuck to their faith tenaciously; in Thuringia the count of Henneberg complained that "neither Godly Scripture, nor sound Godly warning, nor pain has any effect on them." In the Palatinate the burgraf of Alzey asked "What shall I do? the more I condemn and execute, the more they increase."

But the small scattered groups of peace loving non-resistants, whose only wish was to be let alone, and to worship God in their own way, refusing to attend the state churches, were no match for the organized forces of both state and church urged on by a relentless hatred of religious nonconformity, and fear of political anarchy. Persecuting zeal grew from year to year until by 1535 such Anabaptists as were left in southern Germany were relegated to the obscure outlying districts.

TYROL AND THE AUSTRIAS

The Anabaptist movement confined itself in the south to the German speaking sections of the empire. Missionaries and refugees from Switzerland early found their way to the east across Voralberg into Tyrol and the Austrias, along the Inn and the Danube as far as Vienna. Large Anabaptist centers were formed at Landeck, Innsbruck, and Kitzbuhl along the upper Inn; at Passau where the Inn enters the Danube; and at Steyer, Lintz and other towns farther down the Danube. Following the trade routes through the famous Brenner pass, flourishing congregations were established around Sterzing on the north side of the pass, and others on the south side

along the valleys of the Eisack, Puster, and Etch which combine in southern Tyrol to form the Adige in Italy.

In the Tyrolean valleys alone, it was said that by 1529, Anabaptists were found in one hundred twenty localities. Just when they first appeared here is not definitely known, but likely soon after the dispersion at Zurich in 1525. George Zaunring, arrested in 1528, said that he had baptized many along the Inn. Matthias Langer, the following year claimed one hundred converts. George Blaurock was burned at the stake September 6, 1529. Succeeding Blaurock as leader of the Tyroleans was Jacob Hutter, a hatter, native of the Puster valley, who this same year was sent by his persecuted brethren to Moravia to investigate the advisability of a wholesale migration to that land of promise. Pilgram Marbeck had left for Strasburg before the heaviest persecution had set in.

Scattered groups were found in the accessible valleys of all the neighboring Hapsburg provinces, Upper and Lower Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia and Styria. But our knowledge of the Anabaptists of these regions is rather meager, largely, no doubt, because students of their history have not yet taken the trouble to study the archives here with the same zeal shown in the case of Tyrol and Moravia. It is known, however, that Hans Hut during his short meteoric career, in 1527, spent some time in these sections, greatly influencing the whole movement. At Steir he sent out a number of missionaries.

In all the Hapsburg lands, which remained solidly Catholic, where Anabaptists appeared persecution was inaugurated almost from the beginning. Ferdinand, the brother of emperor Charles, was charged with the task of protecting the crown lands against both the Turks from without, and all the dissenters within. The second task he performed well. The first victim was executed at Rotenburg on the Inn, January 4, 1528. His name was

Leonhard Schiemer. One of the hymns in the Ausbund, number 41, is accredited to him, three stanzas of which go as follows,—²

*Thine holy place they have destroyed,
Thine altar overthrown
And, reaching forth their bloody hands
Have foully slain Thine own;
And we alone, a little flock,
The few who still remain,
Are exiles wandering through the land
In sorrow and in pain.*

*We are, alas, like scattered sheep,
The shepherd out of sight,
Each far away from home and hearth
And, like the birds of night
That hide away; in rocky clefts
We have our rocky hold,
Yet near at hand, as for the birds,
There waits the hunter bold.*

*We wander in the forests dark
With dogs upon our track
And, like the captive, silent lamb,
Men bring us, prisoners, back.
They point to us amid the throng
And with their taunts offend,
And long to let the sharpened ax
On heretics descend.*

Schiemer was followed by hundreds of others. In Kitzbuhl, a town in the Archbishopric of Salzburg, during this same year two hundred Anabaptist prisoners were reported. The next year in the same district fifty children were made orphans by the execution of their parents. No stone was left unturned by the Catholic rulers to completely root out the Anabaptist faith. Special state police were organized to search out heretics. The

² Translation by H. S. Burrage.

houses of the victims were burned down; they were sent to the galleys; beheaded, drowned and burned at the stake. Even prospective mothers were given a respite, when condemned for their faith, only until their children were born, after which the children were turned over to orthodox Catholic orphanages, and mothers thrown into the river or burned at the stake. Most despicable of all was the sending out of secret service agents, who, preying upon the simple faith of the unsuspecting Brethren, were urged by the ruling authorities to pretend conversion, submit to baptism, learn the names of their brethren in the faith, then betray them to the authorities.

Under such determined efforts to root out their faith the Anabaptists were soon driven out of the larger centers and into the out of the way places. Many left for Moravia. Although driven under cover, the faith was not entirely extirpated. But persecution continued throughout the entire century.³

MORAVIA

In pleasing contrast to the common experiences of the Anabaptists elsewhere, was the welcome they received for a few years in southern Moravia. There were several reasons why Moravia at this particular time could offer an asylum to the persecuted sects from other regions. It was ruled by a markgraf who was a vassal to the king of Bohemia. During the struggle between rival claimants to the Bohemian throne, many of the vassals of the kingdom had virtually managed their own affairs with little interference from above. In 1526 the crown fell to the lot of archduke Ferdinand of Austria.

³ According to Beck in his *Geschichtsbuecher*, there were executed by 1581, in Tyrol, 479 Anabaptists; in Upper and Lower Austria, 149; in Salzburg, 59; in Styria, 19; in Moravia, 16; and a small number in other Hapsburg possessions.

Although the archduke was wont to rule his possessions with an iron hand, yet he did not dare to encroach too early upon the liberties of the powerful Moravian nobility. And so, these were left for some years with their former autonomous rights. Many of the Moravian noblemen had been sympathetic, for both economic and religious reasons, toward the dissenting sects. Owing to numerous civil wars, population had been greatly reduced in regions, and big estates devastated and made unprofitable. And so, Anabaptists, who were known to be good farmers were often welcomed for economic reasons within the domains of local noblemen, in spite of kingly and imperial edicts to the contrary.

Among the liberal minded noblemen in southern Moravia were the barons von Liechtenstein, Johan and Leonhard, two brothers, whose seat of government was the ancient city of Nikolsburg, near the Austrian border. Anabaptist refugees must have come here quite early; but we know little of them before the coming in July, 1526, of Hubmaier.

Balthasar Hubmaier

Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier, whom we remember as one of the early agitators against infant baptism in Switzerland, was one of the most learned as well as most conservative of Anabaptist leaders. Born about 1480, near Augsburg, a University graduate, and later a University professor in Ingoldstadt, he became an eloquent preacher of Catholic doctrines both in the Cathedral church in Regensburg, and later in Waldshut, the latter an Austrian town just across the Swiss border. His connection with both Zwingli and the opponents of infant baptism in Zurich has been mentioned elsewhere. He joined the Swiss Brethren in the spring of 1525, being baptized by

Reublin; and after this devoted himself wholeheartedly to the Anabaptist cause. He was immediately marked for destruction by archduke Ferdinand, who ordered the town of Waldshut to surrender him. But Hubmaier having become popular, and having secured a large following, the town authorities refused to turn him over to the archduke. The town, besieged soon after surrendered to the Austrian troops. But Hubmaier in the meantime, had fled from the city, unfortunately for himself, to Zurich, where, as an Anabaptist, he was also an outlaw. Here, together with a number of others, he was imprisoned, but upon a partial recantation, and a promise to leave the city he was released. After a short stay in Constance, and a brief period of activity in Augsburg, where as we have seen he baptized Hans Denk, he arrived at Nikolsburg in July 1526, where for one brief year he exercised a dominating influence over the rapidly growing Anabaptist movement at that place, if indeed he was not the actual founder of it.

Rapid Growth

Anabaptism here grew by leaps and bounds, capturing both the leading Lutheran preachers of the city, Oswald Glaidt, and Hans Spitalmaier, as well as the barons von Liechtenstein. Following the example of both their spiritual leaders and their temporal rulers, the people flocked to the new faith by the thousands. In fact Anabaptism practically became the state church. It is said that by the close of the first year it numbered some six thousand; some say double that number. It is likely that the former is more nearly correct. How much of this growth was due to the efforts of Hubmaier is not known, but it is likely that he was ably assisted by other leaders. How many of the adherents were natives, and how many were refugees also is a matter of conjec-

ture, though the latter undoubtedly were far in the minority. Among the Swiss refugees, though never quite a full fledged Anabaptist, was the Zurich publisher Christopher Froschauer, founder of a well known Zurich printing firm, and publisher during the sixteenth century of numerous editions of the famous Froschauer Bible,⁴ in the quaint Swiss dialect, and in general use among the Swiss Anabaptist for the next three centuries. Froschauer set up a printing establishment in Nikolsburg, in which Hubmaier had published during the year no less than fifteen separate pamphlets, mostly on some phase of the baptism question; and all dedicated to various liberal minded noblemen of Moravia.

Perhaps an added cause of the rapid spread of Anabaptism in southern Moravia is to be found in the half way measures adopted here. In fact it is a question whether strictly speaking the religious faith of Hubmaier and that of the Liechtensteins ought to be spoken of as Anabaptist at all. Especially if that term is to be confined to the type of Anabaptism whose lineage we are following in this chapter—the non-resistant type of the Swiss Brethren.

To be sure, the so-called Moravian Anabaptists were separatists, and they advocated and practised religious toleration within certain limits. They rejected infant baptism and practised adult baptism upon confession of faith. But on the question of the relation of church to state they differed quite materially from the other Anabaptists. They did not advocate nor practise non-resistance, a fundamental doctrine of the faith as taught by Grebel, Blaurock, Denk, Sattler, and even to a limited extent by Hut and Hoffman. Hubmaier in his treatise

4 This Bible is still found occasionally as a precious heirloom in the homes of descendants of the Swiss Brethren in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

On the Sword taught that the Christian might use the sword and go to war on certain occasions; and that it was permitted him to be a magistrate, although no magistrate should use his power to enforce religious conformity. Baron von Liechtenstein even violated this doctrine, however, when with the apparent consent of Hubmaier he imprisoned Hut, a fellow Anabaptist, because of a religious difference. The Liechtensteins might have justified their action on the ground that it was impossible to maintain a stable order without the use of force. And it is undoubtedly true that non-resistant Anabaptism and temporal government are incompatible terms in a sinful world. Hubmaier was no longer of the Swiss Brethren.

Factional Disputes

Unfortunately, the same spirit of freedom which in the domain of the Liechtensteins guaranteed the greatest degree of religious toleration, also afforded ample opportunity for the development of those petty factional quarrels which found their birth so readily in the extreme individualism of the Anabaptist movement. Moravian Anabaptism evidently did not grow its rarest flowers in an atmosphere of too much freedom. It was at its worst just here where it should have been at its best.

The first cleavage appeared between the native Lutheran converts to Anabaptism under the leadership of Hubmaier, and the Swiss and Tyrolean refugees under the leadership of Hans Hut, who in the meantime, had also come to Nikolsburg in the fall of 1526, and Jacob Wiedeman, "one eyed Jacob" as he was called for obvious reasons, a native Bavarian, who had arrived at about the same time. Both Hut and Wiedeman strenuously opposed Hubmaier's half way measures. No Christian can be a magistrate they said; neither can he take up the sword

except, as Hut suggested, at the specific command of the Lord at the proper time, to help the Turk usher in the millenium. War taxes, too, Wiedeman called "blood money." As a result of this controversy Hut found himself in prison, from whence he soon escaped, however, and betook himself to Augsburg, where during the fall of 1527, he met his death.

Hubmaier, too, disappears from the Moravian stage of activity in the summer of the same year. Ever since his radical activities at Waldshut he had been closely watched by the archduke of Austria. First at Waldshut, then at Zurich, and now again at Nikolsburg, Ferdinand demanded that he be turned over to the Austrian authorities for punishment. Baron von Liechtenstein was none too reluctant, as it seems to us now, to turn over a fellow Anabaptist to what he knew would be sure death. Likely he could not help himself. Hubmaier and his wife were both imprisoned in Vienna, where on March 10, 1528, he was burned at the stake; and a few days later his devoted wife with a stone tied about her neck was tossed into the Danube.

Hubmaier was not made of heroic clay. Sensitive to physical pain, shrinking from torture, he thrice had recanted during his brief career. In his last imprisonment he hoped against hope that he might be able to satisfy his persecutors with a compromise. He was never able, however, to entirely smother his deep seated religious convictions. When he saw that his enemies were bent on his destruction unless he made a complete denial of his faith as an Anabaptist, he showed a fine spirit of Christian resignation. As his executioners rubbed gunpowder and sulphur into his beard and hair to hasten his death, he appealed to the bystanders "O dear brothers, pray God that He will forgive my guilt in this my death. I will die in the Christian faith." As the flames ap-

proached to consume him, and his beard caught fire he called out in a loud voice "O my Heavenly Father, O my gracious God."

Among modern Baptist historians Hubmaier is regarded as the greatest of the Anabaptists. This is no doubt largely due to his numerous writings on the practise of baptism itself, a rite looming large in modern Baptist theology; and further to the fact that by his denial of the doctrine of non-resistance and his defence of the magistracy he accords more nearly with the views of modern Baptists than do the other Anabaptists of that day. But if judged by the prevailing views of the majority of his fellow laborers, and especially by the influence he exerted upon the further growth of the movement, Hubmaier can hardly be accorded this distinction. He differed from nearly all his brethren outside of Nikolsburg on one of the most fundamental doctrines of the faith. His type of Anabaptism died with him, soon after disappearing even from Moravia; and that of the Swiss Brethren only survived to later times. Neither was the rise of the later English Baptist movement in any way to be traced to Hubmaier; the English Baptists at the time had never heard of him. Their first contact with the continental successors to Anabaptism was with the non-resistant Mennonites of Amsterdam, a century after the death of Hubmaier. His greatness is measured by Baptist historians not by his influence upon the movement of his day, but rather by his agreement with Baptist views of the present.

The troubles in the Nikolsburg church did not cease with the disappearance of Hut and Hubmaier. Wiedeman continued his dispute with Hubmaier's successor, Hans Spitalmaier, in behalf of the Swiss type of the faith. But to the old subject of controversy a new one now was added—*communism*, which was not practised among the

Swiss. The demand that all goods be held in common, no doubt, resulted from the necessities of the poverty stricken refugees who continually found their way into the barony. Caring for these refugees was a heavy burden on the native Anabaptists. Early in the spring of 1527, Wiedeman complained that the native church "does not give shelter to the pilgrims and refugees from other countries." Soon natives and exiles had separate meetings. The larger group, faithful to the teaching of Hubmaier on the sword, and mostly natives, were known as *Schwaerdtler* (the party of the sword); while Wiedeman's smaller party, mostly exiles with Swiss views were known as *Staebler* (the party of the staff).

The Beginning of the Community of Goods

But Baron von Liechtenstein would permit no division within the ranks of his church. He informed Wiedeman that if he could not conform to the will of the majority he would have to leave. With a small group of about two hundred, Wiedeman chose the latter alternative. Now was an opportune time to adopt the communistic practise. On their outward journey, the party stopped just beyond the city walls, where, electing a "minister of temporal needs" they

"laid down their cloaks, and every man threw down on it entirely of his own accord without compulsion, his earthly possessions according to the teachings of the prophets and apostles for the benefit of the needy."

Although Leonhard von Liechtenstein forced the issue which resulted in the exile of the little flock of *Staebler* and communists, he evidently bore them no ill will; for he accompanied them to the borders of his own barony, where he dismissed them with his blessing, drinking to their health and bidding them God speed. At the border

the little party was fortunate in being met by another set of noblemen, the barons von Kaunitz, who were as glad to receive the exiles on their devastated estates near Austerlitz as the Liechtensteins were loath to see them go. "If there were a thousand of them" said one of the Kaunitz brothers, "we would gladly receive them."

The Austerlitz settlement was founded on a strictly communistic basis. The whole community lived as one family in a group called a Household. Believing to have found here the promised land, they soon sent out messengers to their persecuted brethren in the Palatinate, Suabia, Bavaria, Hesse, and especially Tyrol urging all of them to come to Moravia where they would be welcome. Many came, including among others such leaders as Wilhelm Reublin, prominent in the Swiss beginnings a few years before, and George Zaunring with a number of Tyrolean followers. Soon additional Households had to be established at Znaim, Bruin, Eibenschuetz, and Schaeckowitz, all near by. At Rossitz a large community was founded by Gabriel Ascherham with his following from Silesia, which in a short time mounted up to twelve hundred members; to these latter was added also about this time a company of some five hundred Suabians under the leadership of Philip Blauermel.

It would have been strange indeed if these different groups, coming as they did from various sections of middle Europe with differing customs and practices under their own strong minded leaders, should not have had some difficulty under the stress of communistic control in harmonizing their conflicting views. In Austerlitz especially, the original Household, where "One eyed Jacob" exercised a rather arbitrary and rigid discipline, and where he guarded jealously his ministerial authority against all newcomers there soon developed a rather unlovely controversy among both leaders and laymen. The

old question of the relation of the state to the church evidently was not entirely settled by leaving Nikolsburg. Some of the Austerlitzers, citing the example of Jesus at Capernaum, insisted that the brethren should assume all the burdens of citizenship like the other inhabitants of the land; others declared this to be impossible under the non-resistant faith. Their duty was merely to obey and pay for the authorities over them.

The strict enforcement, too, by Jacob of the communistic regulations became extremely distasteful to many who had come from congregations where communism was unknown. Even in his own original flock he found some difficulty in securing implicit obedience. His attempt to secure husbands for the marriageable sisters especially was resented by the latter. The sisters also complained that their taskmaster gave them difficult Scripture lessons to memorize which greatly humiliated them in case of failure. Some evidently did not share their all. These went to the markets, it was said, and buying what they pleased, brought discontent to the others. Some complained because housing quarters were crowded. The Tyroleans thought the order of worship was not as good as theirs at home, and that there was much laxness in the bringing up of the children.

The leaders seemingly had the most difficult time of all in getting on together. In the words of an old chronicler,

“In the meantime it came about, since the devil never remains at rest, but is continually going about within the house of the Lord like a roaring lion seeking on all sides to sow discord and destroy the unity of the Spirit, and that which is Godly, he struck at the most vital point, namely the elders, since the life of the whole people leans upon them as the holy Judith says in her book.”

These differences came to a head one day in 1530, when Reublin, who was an ordained minister, began to

expound the Scriptures during the absence of Wiedeman, for which he was severely reprimanded by the latter upon his return. Zaunring, the Tyrolean, also a minister, whose gift was not recognized by "One eyed Jacob," sided in with Reublin and his follows. As a result, about one hundred and fifty members under the leadership of these two left for the neighboring district, Auspitz, where on convent lands given them by the Abbess of Brun they established a separate Household.

In the meantime Gabriel Ascherham and Philip Blauermel had fallen out with one another at Rossitz. Philip also led his faction to Auspitz. These two groups came to be known in the records of the period as *Gabrielists* and *Philipists*.

Jacob Hutter

It is needless to suggest that these various religious controversies seriously impaired the spiritual health of the whole Moravian Anabaptist community. Some of the more devoted adherents of the faith among all the different groups, realizing the seriousness of the situation appealed to their Tyrolean brethren for an impartial arbitrator who might help them heal their troubles. The Tyroleans, in 1531, sent them a minister who had already been in Moravia two years before, and one who was to play an important role among them for a few years—Jacob Hutter.

Whether Hutter was a communist while still in Tyrol, is not definitely known, but at the time of his first visit to Moravia in 1529 he had freely associated with the elders of the communistic congregation at Austerlitz and found himself as of "one heart and mind" with them, "in the fear and service of the Lord." Upon his return to his native land his enthusiastic report of the freedom enjoyed in Moravia sent many of his oppressed brethren

to that land of promise. Most of these, no doubt, affiliated themselves with the Austerlitz communists. Hutter himself remained to direct the work in Tyrol. How he succeeded as peacemaker between the congregations at Auspitz and Austerlitz on the occasion of his second visit in 1531 we do not know. But when he returned in 1533 to Auspitz to make that his permanent home he came "not as to strangers" he said, "but as to dear brethren"; and according to an old chronicler, "bringing with him to the common treasury "a temporal gift, a sweet offering, yes a little saving so that the loan which the Abbess of Brun had made them could be paid off." Here Hutter was invited by his many admirers to assume equal pastoral duties with others, although each Household was already well supplied with native pastors, a suggestion which he was not slow to act upon.

Jacob Hutter evidently was a man of strong and aggressive personality, and a strict disciplinarian. Most of the other ministers were soon lined up against him. But having won the confidence of a majority of the members in the various congregations, he was able to discipline his fellow ministers with a ruthless hand. Especially insistent was he upon a rigid enforcement of the rule of communism. The controversy was not always carried on in the spirit of Christian humility befitting fellow sufferers for the faith. Uncomplimentary adjectives, and what today at least would be regarded as unnecessarily harsh epithets were hurled back and forth without the least compunction. The Philipists were most bitter against the friends of Hutter, and the latter found fault with almost all the others. Poor Wilhelm Reublin, who was such a credit to the early Swiss movement, now charged with reserving twenty-four gulden of his own private money from the common treasury in a time of sickness, was cast out as a "faithless, lying, malicious

Ananias." Philip Blauermel was also excommunicated by Hutter as a "liar" for saying that the people were worshipping the latter as an idol; Bohemian David was expelled because, when he departed from Austerlitz he engaged a company of soldiers to accompany him; Zaunring for taking back his wife, who had been charged with adultery; and Schuetzinger, Hutter's co-laborer in his earlier visits to Moravia, for deceit. Some of these upon proper confession of their sins were permitted to return to the fold; others never did. Reublin completely disappears from Anabaptist history at this point.

So completely did strong armed Jacob Hutter dominate the whole Moravian situation that, according to the chronicler of these events all the survivors of the church are called *Hutterisch* to this day. Since this term "Hutterisch" has never been officially turned into English, the people who followed the teaching of Jacob Hutter shall here be called *Hutterites*, perhaps as good a rendering of the term as any other. That all these other ministers were rabid sinners, and Jacob alone a saint is not likely. The chronicler from whom these facts are learned, the only source of information on this subject, himself a member of the group called "Hutterisch," no doubt was unduly prejudiced in favor of his hero. But be that as it may, the fact remains that all the other factions of the Moravian Anabaptist faith ultimately disappeared, and only the Hutterites survived the stress of the times. A small handful of these survivors driven out of their native land, set their faces toward the east. Their children's children in the course of the next two centuries found their way finally by way of Hungary and Wallachia to Russia; and ultimately during the latter part of the last century such of their descendents as still claimed the faith found a final refuge on the prairies of our own Dakotas.

As just suggested, the freedom from outside interference in affairs of religion enjoyed by the Moravian Anabaptists was too good to last. King Ferdinand, who had always hated them as "more dangerous than murderers, and enemies of the land," and who had withheld the iron hand of persecution only because of fear of the powerful noblemen in his newly acquired kingdom, had by 1532 evidently won sufficient influence over these noblemen to venture upon an aggressive policy of persecution. At any rate in the above year, he succeeded in forcing through the Moravian Landtag, held at Znaim, an edict banishing all Anabaptists and Jews from the land. The nobles, no matter how highly they might prize the economic worth of their industrious tenants, now had no recourse but to enforce the order of the king. The Households consequently were broken up, and their occupants driven out into the open fields and under the open sky to seek a living as best they could; the inhabitants everywhere were forbidden under pain of heavy punishment to give these exiles shelter, food or drink. The object evidently was to harry them out of the land as rapidly as possible.

All factions and parties had to go—the *Schwaerdtler* of Nikolsburg, as well as the *Staebler* of Austerlitz; the *Philipists*, who left with "songs on their lips"; the *Gabrielists*, and the *Hutterisch*. At first the large company tried to keep together, but finding this impossible, they formed into small groups of eight or ten to seek as best they could their sustenance among an unfriendly people. The natives remained for the most part hidden in the forests and hills of their own native Moravian home land, hoping for better times. The foreign refugees, many of them, found their way back to the lands from which they had originally come—the Philipists to Suabia, the Gabrielists to Silesia. Jacob Hutter with "pack on his back" turned

his face toward his native Tyrol. Some sixty Swiss Brethren were apprehended near the Bavarian border where they were imprisoned in the castle of Passau. Here they composed during the next few years a group of hymns which later formed the nucleus of the famous old *Ausbund*, the hymn book still in use without a change by the Old Order Amish in the hills of eastern Pennsylvania, and the plains of central Kansas.

In vain Hutter pled with the Moravian authorities in behalf of his brethren.

"We do not seek to harm or injure any one" he said, "not even our worst enemy. Our deeds are an open book, our words public to all. Rather than owe any man a penny we would be robbed of a hundred gulden. Rather than harm any one with a stroke of the hand, we would lose our lives. Our whole life ambition is to live according to God's truth, and justice in peace and harmony as true followers of Christ. Those who say we have gathered in the open fields by the thousands as if to prepare for war are not telling the truth. If all the world were like minded all wars would cease, and all unrighteousness would have an end."

But all to no avail. The Households were not restored. The congregations were permanently scattered. The remnants that later gathered together, as noted before were all of the Hutterite faction.

In Tyrol, Jacob Hutter was permitted only a brief period of further labor—all the while at the risk of great personal danger, with a price upon his head, a marked man. In the cellars of the houses of his friends, in the forests, in secret places among the hills, wherever he could do so without inviting detection, he gathered together his brethren and ministered unto them to the end. He was finally apprehended near his birth place, taken to Innsbruck, where he lay in prison for some months; and after undergoing a season of the most cruel torture inflicted upon him by his enemies in the hope that they

might secure from him a denial of his faith, and information as to the identity and whereabouts of his brethren, he was burned at the stake in the early spring of 1536, stout hearted and faithful to the very last.

THE LOWER RHINE

Anabaptism found its way down the Rhine rather slowly. It took several years after its first appearance in Switzerland before there were many traces of it in the Netherlands and northwestern Germany. There may have been small and isolated groups here and there in the cities of the Lowlands somewhat earlier, but there was nothing like an organized effort before the appearance in these regions of Melchior Hoffman about 1529. In fact, the whole movement here is so closely associated in its initial stages with the work of that zealous apostle of the cause that a brief review of his life must necessarily preface any adequate account of the spread of the Anabaptist cause along the lower Rhine.

Melchior Hoffman

Melchior Hoffman, a Suabian by birth, early in life learned the trade of a tanner. "That good for nothing fellow who dresses hides," Zwingli calls him in 1523. Without formal education, but unusually familiar with the contents of the Bible, and possessed of an eloquent tongue and a vivid imagination, he early became a fiery and popular lay preacher of radical Lutheran principles, for a time with the approval of Luther himself. For several years he travelled continually and extensively along the Baltic Sea coast, on both the German and Swedish sides, with such radical fellow laborers as Carlstadt, and Melchior Rinck, the latter a follower of Thomas Muenzer, plying his trade while he preached to large and

enthusiastic groups of followers, sometimes with disastrous results, as when in Stockholm he was driven from the city for inaugurating a crusade against the pictures and statues in the city churches. In 1527, he was invited by the King of Denmark to serve as a sort of court preacher at Kiel. Here he established a printing press on which he published many of his numerous tracts explaining his radical views on many of the mysteries of the Scriptures.

Hoffman was especially attracted by the prophecies of the Bible as they appeared in the books of Daniel and Revelation, those most dangerous of all books in the hands of unlettered enthusiasts. Being adept at an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, he greatly astonished and attracted the unlearned masses with his supposed insight into Divine mysteries. He made much of Biblical symbolism; every recurring number, especially the number seven, every occult phrase had a significant meaning for him. Particularly dangerous were his eschatological and chiliastic views. While still in Sweden he taught the people that Christ's kingdom, the kingdom of the elect would soon appear on the earth. By a method of computation all his own, based on both Daniel and Revelation, he calculated that the great cataclysm would take place seven years from that time—in the year 1533. Strasburg was to be the assembling place of the one hundred and forty-four thousand saints which the prophecies foretold would be the number of faithful left on the earth to inaugurate the new Jerusalem.

Like Hut, Hoffman believed that the new era, preceded by a period of great persecution would be ushered in through the agency of the Turks. Two reincarnated messengers, Elias and Enoch, would appear in due time to clear the way for the great event. One of these, Elias, was already here in the person of Hoffman himself.

Enoch was to follow. Hoffman, it will be observed, did not advocate the use of force in bringing in the new kingdom. Nor did he share the belief of Hut that at a later appointed time the Christian would be justified in participating in bringing about that event. His theories, however, under more fanatical leadership later were no less dangerous than were those of the more militant Hut.

One other peculiar view of Hoffman's distinguished him at this particular time from his co-laborers, his theory of the incarnation. According to his view, Jesus at his birth owed nothing of his being to the flesh of Mary. Mary served merely as a medium through which Jesus came into the world, like unto light as it passes through glass, as later disciples of his put it. The reason back of this unusual explanation of the incarnation in the mind of Hoffman was the necessity of keeping Jesus sin-less. Hoffman could not see how sin-less-ness could emerge from sinful flesh. The only escape was to have Jesus born without either earthly father or mother. The latter view was especially objectionable to the Catholics, since it detracted from the adoration of the Virgin Mary as the mother of Jesus.

Hoffman arrived at his Anabaptist views rather gradually. At first an ardent Lutheran, he soon leaned toward many of the doctrines of Zwingli, especially in the matter of the Lord's supper; and finally shared with the Anabaptists especially such views as were based on a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, as those on the oath and the magistracy. He became a full-fledged Anabaptist in 1529 when it is thought he was baptized at Strasburg, where he had come in contact with such leaders as Denk, and Hetzer, as well as Sebastian Franck and other liberal theologians who were not of the Anabaptist faith.

He perhaps underwent little change of heart and mind at the time of his baptism except to officially join

a group with whom he was already at one; and he seemingly forgot none of his apocalyptic vagaries. For his few remaining years he now became an aggressive and fiery expounder and apostle of Anabaptist views as he understood them, having for his sole field almost the whole of the lowlands in Netherlands and northwestern Germany. He left immediately for the city of Emden in East Friesland, where he first introduced adult baptism in these regions. He immediately gained a great following, especially among the common people, and at one time baptized three hundred converts in the great minster itself.

The time was ripe in the low countries for an aggressive leader of a new evangelical life. Neither Lutheranism nor Zwinglianism had taken strong root here. The evangelical movement, influenced somewhat by earlier dissenting groups, remained unorganized, highly individualistic and leaderless. It was Hoffman's great opportunity, and he was not slow to take advantage of it. From Emden as a center, he spent the next few years of his life in ceaseless missionary activity in behalf of the Anabaptist cause, travelling all over the provinces of northern Holland and East Friesland, preaching and baptizing, and not forgetting to prophesy the inauguration within a few years of the kingdom of the just.

The common people especially heard him gladly; and converts flocked to him by the thousands, among others Jan Volkertszoon Tryjpmaker, (maker of wooden shoes) who in turn in 1530 was the first to introduce Anabaptism into Amsterdam. Tryjpmaker, too, was an enthusiastic apostle of the new cause, meeting his death for his faith the next year at the Hague by burning. Among the number converted and baptized by the latter were two men, who because of their later connection with Anabaptist history are of interest here, Sicke Freerks,

the tailor whose execution at Leeuwarden a little later caused a Witmarsum priest, Menno Simons by name, to study the Bible for an explanation of infant baptism; and Jan Matthys, a Haarlem baker, who preached a chiliastic doctrine more fanatical than Hoffman ever dreamed of, which he tried out a few years later at Münster with such disastrous results. Matthys himself soon became an enthusiastic preacher of the new faith, and an eloquent missionary of the cause, not only travelling extensively but sending out many disciples who carried his own teaching through all northern Holland. Among these were two who visited Friesland, Bartelemeus Boekbinder and Dirk Cuyper, who baptized at Leeuwarden, two brothers, Obbe and Dirk Philips, co-laborers, later on, of Menno Simons.

But neither church nor state approved of the religious movement so enthusiastically promoted by Hoffman and Tryjpmaker. Many of the converts were sent to prison, and most of the preachers to the executioners block as rebels and heretics. Hoffman was greatly disappointed and disillusioned by this turn of affairs. Thinking that the favor with which his message was received in Emden, and the toleration granted him there by the authorities to be certain evidence of the approval of Providence on his work and a sure sign that the inauguration of the millenium was now assured, he was puzzled and dismayed by the fierce persecution that now set in against his brethren. Perhaps after all he was mistaken as to the time. But Hoffman was not the kind of man who would long be without Biblical justification for a change of tactics if necessary. Finding in the Old Testament that Zerubabel had one time delayed work on the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem for a period of two years because of the opposition of the enemy, so he now also ordered his disciples to cease baptizing for an equal period of time to avoid persecution, hoping no doubt that

by that time the new kingdom would be established. Preaching, however, continued. His adherents became known as *Melchiorites*.

Melchior Hoffman followed his visions to the end. Influenced by the prophecies of an old man that he, Hoffman, must first be imprisoned in Strasburg, which was now to be the new Jerusalem, for six months preceding the establishing of the kingdom of the saints, he journeyed to that city to be present among the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were to gather there at the appropriate time, the year 1533. The old man's prophecies were fulfilled. Hoffman had no difficulty in getting himself imprisoned; not for six months, of course, but for the rest of his life. Here he died some years later, disillusioned, and ready to admit that the whole thing was but an idle dream.

MUENSTER

In the meantime another evangelical movement entirely independent of the one just mentioned was developing in the city of Münster, the seat of a Catholic bishopric in Westphalia. The bishop, an unusually harsh ruler, was decidedly unpopular among his subjects, a fact which greatly encouraged the demand for religious as well as political reform. By 1533, under the leadership of a liberal preacher, Bernard Rothman, the city had accepted a radical Lutheran religion. Paralleling this religious movement was one of social democracy, supported by the working men of the city and led by another Bernard,—Knipperdolling. Religious and social reform were thus closely intertwined here from the first. With the coming of Heinrich Roll, an Anabaptist of the Melchiorite party from Julich-Cleve, the Münster agitation entered a new phase. Rothman was persuaded to accept baptism, and

many followed his example. Although the Lutheran religious forces in the city stoutly opposed this new development, the labor guilds of the town, attracted more by the social message of the Anabaptist gospel than by that of the Lutherans, enthusiastically supported Rothman and Roll in their religious efforts.

The Anabaptist movement in Münster up to this time likely remained of the Melchiorite variety, still peaceful and largely non-resistant, and with the exception of the millenarian germ, not particularly to be feared. But with the coming of Jan Matthys and his disciples in the early spring of 1534, the movement enters a more dangerous phase. Non-resistance now gives way to an aggressive spirit of revolution. And with the passing of the non-resistant spirit, the Anabaptism which we have been following so far in this chapter throughout middle Europe disappears here in Münster in everything but name.

Jan Matthys as we saw, preached a much more militant type of millenarianism than did his teacher, Melchior Hoffman. According to the latter, the Christian's part in the great drama was a passive one—merely to await the coming of the great day; while according to the former the day was already at hand and he, Matthys, was the Enoch prophesied by Hoffman; and it was now the duty of the faithful to take up the sword in behalf of the new kingdom to be established. Münster instead of Strasburg was to be the seat of the new Jerusalem.

Matthys, who had already chafed under Hoffman's order to cease baptizing for two years, now that the latter was a prisoner in Strasburg, took entire control of the Anabaptist movement in these regions, announcing that the time for action had now arrived, and that baptizing might be resumed. Numerous disciples of his were sent throughout the land, broadcasting this news, two of whom as we have just seen entered Münster in January of 1534.

That Matthys did not regard himself as merely the successor to Hoffman, but that he thought himself about to inaugurate an entirely new movement is evidenced by the fact that he insisted on rebaptizing again all those who had already been initiated through the rite of adult baptism into the church of Rothman and Roll, including these two leaders themselves. Within a few days fourteen hundred were added to his group, no doubt embracing the larger part of those already Anabaptists. His party can no longer be regarded as an Anabaptist party of the type of Sattler and Denk or even of Hoffman. In fact the act of baptism was now rather a political than a religious symbol. Apostles of this Münsterite movement as we shall call it hereafter for want of a better name, were sent out under the personal leadership of Matthys throughout the low countries, appearing first among the Melchiorites wherever possible, preaching the new gospel, and inviting all the faithful to gather at Münster to await the ushering in of the new Jerusalem.

In the meantime the Bishop of Münster, driven from his charge some time before, alarmed at the turn affairs had taken, and determined to crush all revolt against his authority, gathered a small army among his followers and laid siege to the city. The whole movement entered its final stage when, in April of 1534, Jan Matthys was killed in an attempt to break through the lines, leaving another Jan,—Jan van Leiden in command of the misguided enthusiasts. It was under Leiden's rule of a little more than a year that all the horrible excesses and bloody orgies, which have ever since given the whole Münster affair such an unsavory reputation in Reformation annals took place. That episode, unfortunately, is the best known and in many cases the only known part of the whole so-called Anabaptist movement among church and secular historians. Familiarity with the facts of that unfortunate

event can therefore be taken for granted here, and only a few scattered comments are necessary.

While no attempt is made here to justify all that was done in the name of religion by Jan van Leiden, yet even the most disreputable and fanatical practises indulged in by the Münsterites at this time can be explained by the facts of their real situation. They were engaged in a life and death struggle. There was no hope of escape. Such as tried to break through the lines were taken captive and executed. Every ounce of reserve force would have to be mobilized and conserved against the danger from the outside. There could be no divided loyalty within. Under such a situation terrible things may happen. They did during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. During a critical period of the siege all those who wished to take the chances of escape through the lines, were given an opportunity to leave the city; all others were forced to submit to baptism, an act which was no longer of particular religious significance, but merely a covenant cementing together the entire body as a single unit in its resolve to fight together to the last ditch, a sort of a blood oath of allegiance. Strict discipline now demanded that every act of treachery must be punished. This accounts for the countless executions in cold blood upon the mere word of Jan van Leiden during the closing months of the siege, not because of religious fanaticism, but of the necessity of keeping discipline within the ranks. It was a war measure.

As the months dragged on and the situation of the Münsterites became more desperate and hopeless, van Leiden devised new schemes of control, and discovered new sources of hope of victory; upon Bible authority of course, because that gave all he did religious sanction, the greatest of all the sources of courage and hope. Fol-

lowing Old Testament example, he now abandoned the theocratic form of government with ruling elders which had been established by Matthys, and set up a supreme dictatorship with himself at the head under the title of King David. From now on his word was law. Perhaps even the introduction of polygamy was the result of military necessity, and in the interests of public morality rather than as a concession to the lust of King David. There were perhaps three or four times as many women as men in Münster at this period. It is entirely possible that the order compelling every woman to choose a husband was inaugurated as a measure of protection to the women themselves, and in the interests of public morality. At any rate the practice had ample Old Testament sanction. Contrary to the popular notion, there was no promiscuity or community of wives. Breaches of the marriage tie, and violations of the prescribed standards were summarily punished.

In the meantime the apostles who had earlier been sent out to invite the oppressed to share the new Israel, were now succeeded by envoys who were secretly sent through the lines to urge these same oppressed to come to the help of their brethren in distress. The times evidently were ripe for a wide acceptance throughout the whole north country of the Münsterite doctrines. The hope of relief from a relentless religious persecution and economic oppression, famine and pestilence, religious fanaticism, the breaking down of inefficient local government, and even the signs in the heavens in the form of a comet,⁵ all conspired together to turn all these regions into a seething revolt against the established religious order. In every town and village almost there were groups, varying as to size, of enthusiastic and fanatical men and women who either attempted to set up local

5 The well known Halleys Comet.

Münsters, or who gathered together relief expeditions for the doomed city in Westphalia.

But none of the relief expeditions ever got far beyond their place of beginning; and nowhere were the fanatics able to gain the upper hand, although a number of cities along the lower Rhine barely missed the fate of Münster. Some of these religious enthusiasts were perhaps recruited from the ranks of the Melchiorite party; very few if any were of the peaceful, non-resistant group later known as Obbenites; many of them were pure adventurers ready for any excitement that came along. Most of them were genuine religious enthusiasts, misguided though sincere, seeking escape from religious persecution, and hoping for participation in the joys of the new Israel soon to be established. These latter generally accepted rebaptism, which now had become a mere symbol of admission into a new revolutionary party, and perhaps no longer had any real religious significance. But they are generally known by the name Anabaptist.

The situation of the defenders of Münster became increasingly desperate in the winter of 1534 and spring of 1535. Intercourse with the outside world had been entirely cut off. Food became scarce. Famine and disease threatened early disaster. Every available foot of ground space within the walls was planted to seed. First the horses were slaughtered, then the dogs and cats, later mice and rats and every living thing that could be eaten; and finally the daily diet was reduced to leather, leaves and grass. Small groups of discouraged spirits continually attempted escape through the lines only to be captured by the army of the Bishop and put to immediate death. And so near the end, the population had been so reduced by famine, disease, desertion, execution and suicide that by the time the city fell, through the treachery of one of its own defenders, there were only a few

hundred of the faithful left. Such as survived the above calamities were now summarily put to the sword by the victorious besiegers. A few of the leaders were reserved for a worse fate. Rothman disappeared, and his fate has remained a mystery to this day. But Jan van Leiden, together with Bernard Knipperdolling were taken captive, later to be sent through all the towns of north-western Germany as criminal exhibits, and finally after severe torture to be publically executed as dangerous criminals. Their bodies were then placed in iron cages suspended from the towers of St. Lambert's church, and exposed to the public gaze until they rotted. Their bones lay bleaching in the sun for many years as an example to the passerby of what happens to such as dare oppose the established authority in church and state.

Among the lessons to be extracted from this unfortunate episode in Anabaptist history perhaps this one is outstanding—the union of intense enthusiasm with ignorance is almost sure to bear evil fruit. While the leaders of the sober and thoroughly sane type of Anabaptism were men of solid learning, such men as Conrad Grebel, Balthasar Hubmaier, Hans Denk, Michael Sattler, and later Menno Simons, ex-monks and University graduates for the most part, the leaders of the fanatical offshoots, on the other hand, were men of little or no scholastic training; laboring men, intensely interested, and perhaps well posted in the contents of a single book—the Bible, but with little knowledge of the great outside field of learning, self appointed lay preachers largely, men of unbalanced interests. Hans Hut was a carpenter, and Melchior Hoffman a furrier; Jan Matthys was a baker, and Jan van Leiden a tailor. Even knowledge of the Bible if not backed up by a sane and well balanced world view may not be a safeguard against religious fanaticism and spiritual anarchy.

If the reader feels that too much space has been given to the Münsterites in this brief survey of Anabaptist history, this justification may be offered—the fact that few modern writers take the trouble to differentiate between the fanatical and sober groups, to the great injustice of the latter. Anabaptism is made to cover a multitude of sins. It is undoubtedly quite evident to the reader of this chapter that the misguided, fanatical and violently revolutionary Münsterites differ as night and day from the peaceful, sober, non-resistant Swiss Brethren, and their following in Tyrol, Moravia and south Germany. The two groups shared but one thing in common; both were separatists, and made rebaptism a symbol of their separation from the prevailing state churches. The Münsterites, however, practically established a state church of their own. In other practises and doctrines as important as that of baptism they differed widely, so widely that their differences were much greater than their common interest. The synonomous term Sects sometimes also applied to all separatists would be a more appropriate generic term than Anabaptist; for unlike the latter it leaves room for a wide variety of beliefs and practises. No one would think of holding one Sect responsible for the evil deeds of another just because they shared one practise and were classed under one generic name. The Pilgrim Fathers also were separatists, though not Anabaptists. But they had much more in common with the Swiss Brethren than did the latter with their so-called fellow Anabaptists at Münster.

And so, between the Swiss and other non-resistant Anabaptists, and the Münsterites there was no spiritual kinship whatever. But no matter how bitterly the non-resistant groups repudiated the revolutionary acts of the Münsterites, nor how insistently they complained against being classified in the same group, the authorities, both

church and state, persisted in branding all separatists who practised rebaptism under one name, the hated name of Münsterite Anabaptist, glad that in the stigma of that name they possessed a powerful weapon in their fight against all those who demanded freedom of conscience. The non-resistant Brethren never were able to clear themselves of the odium. And, as a result, after the collapse of Münster all such groups as practised adult baptism, irrespective of any other theories or practises, were submitted to a period of terrible persecution all over Europe which lasted for nearly another full century.

No historian of the Anabaptist movement, using the term in its widest generic meaning, of course can claim the absence of all lineal connection between the south German Brethren and the Münsterites. There was in a way a direct succession from the followers of Sattler and Denk in Strasburg, where Hoffman was baptized, through the latter by way of Tryjpmaker, Matthys, and Jan Leiden. But the mere fact that Leiden can trace his baptism through direct lineage to the non-resistant Anabaptists at Strasburg does not commit the large body of peaceful Anabaptists to the evil practises and the fanatical theories that found their first inception in the fertile though diseased brain of that ill advised revolutionist. Denk and Sattler were in no way responsible for the later excesses of Jan van Leiden. Though it must be confessed that the chiliastic theories of Hut and Hoffman were full of dynamite. For this reason, too, no story of the Anabaptists, even in the more limited meaning of the term, is quite complete without at least a brief mention of the rise and fall of Münster.

Obbenites

It should be remembered, too, that the Münster influence was confined almost exclusively to northwestern

Germany and the Netherlands. It never reached far southward. The Brethren of the south did not have to contend with the fanatics as did the Anabaptists of the low countries. In the Netherlands, too, as has been suggested, there were numerous Melchiorites who were not corrupted by the Münsterites; and a peaceful group who kept themselves entirely aloof. In fact this latter group, though at first affiliated with the Melchiorites, yet soon began to disagree with the peculiar beliefs of Melchior Hoffman that the millenium was at hand, soon to be inaugurated without the active participation of the faithful. This remnant, just how large we do not know, directed by a saner and more intelligent leadership, kept their sanity, and finding no evidence in the Scriptures of an immediate impending social cataclysm, were convinced that the world would continue for some time to move along conventional lines, with the tares and the wheat growing up together, and sinner and saint living side by side. Sin would continue in the world, and the true Christian would have to continue his struggle to build up the kingdom of God on earth against the evil designs of wicked men. The millenium was still far away; and the end of suffering was not yet.

The leader of this group was Obbe Philips, aided later by his younger brother Dirk, two devout Frisian Catholics from Leeuwarden, who in the early thirties of the century had affiliated themselves with the Melchior Anabaptists of that region. Of the two brothers, Dirk was perhaps the better educated, being a member of the order of Franciscans. But Obbe, too, as a surgeon by profession, must have been a man of more than ordinary intelligence, certainly with more learning than that possessed by the leaders of the more fanatical wings of the Anabaptist movement of his day.

Although ordained an elder in the Melchior group,

he soon found himself at variance with the Melchiorite teaching on the early approach of the millenium; and especially when some of the Melchiorites began to develop decided leanings toward Münster, he launched a vigorous protest against the whole Münsterite movement. Such of his members as left for Münster he expelled from membership. And in order to save his flock from contamination by the expelled Münsterites he added another religious practise to that of expulsion—*Avoidance*, which forbade all social intercourse as well as religious affiliation with an expelled member.

This practise, which as we shall see later, played an important role among the controversies in the early history of the Mennonite church, was thus first inaugurated as a defensive measure guarding the church against false teaching from without, rather than as a means of bringing back an erring brother who had been denied church fellowship because of wrong doing, which was the usual justification offered by later apologists for the practise.

This peaceful and soundly Biblical wing of the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands was sometimes called by the name of *Obbenites* after their chief leader; and was the group with which Menno Simons later affiliated.

ANABAPTIST PARTIES

In order, therefore, to be true to historic fact, as well as to be fair to a large body of humble and pious followers of the man of Galilee, one must discriminate when speaking of the people generally known during the Reformation period as Anabaptists. Although modern historians generally fail to make this distinction, the writers of the middle of the sixteenth century did not. Hein-

rich Bullinger, a Swiss Reformed preacher, and historian of this movement, writing in 1560, recognized thirteen different groups among the Anabaptists in the course of their history to his time. Among others he mentions the *Apostolic*, who read their Bibles literally, travelled about without staff and shoes, and carried no money; the *Holy, Sinless, Baptists*, who omitted "forgive our sins" from the Lord's prayer because they were beyond sinning; the *Enthusiasts*; *Free Brethren*, and the remaining groups to the *Münsterites*, who differed from all the others, in that while all others lived a peaceful, sober life, pious and humble, opposed to the exercise of authority, these on the other hand "aimed to dominate the world through force." Christoff Erhardus, a bitter opponent of the *Hutterites*, writing in 1589 lists forty separate groups. Among his Latin and German titles, foisted upon them by their enemies of course, here freely translated into English are the following—*Muenzerites*, *Münsterites*, *Staebler*, *Austerlitzers*, *David Georgites*, *Mennonites*, *Silent Brethren*, *Hoffmanites*, *Apostolical*, *Holy Brethren*, *Blood Thirsty*, *Barefooted Brethren*, *Priest Murderers*, *Adam Pastorites*, *Gabrielites*, *Swiss Brethren*, *Pilgram Marbeckites*, *Epicureans*, *Hutterites*, etc. Like Bullinger's list of course this also includes all the factions from the beginning of the movement up to the author's own day, all but three of which by this time had long since passed into history; and several of which seemingly never existed at all, not as Anabaptists at least.

As just suggested, only one type of Anabaptism has survived to this present time—the non-resistant type divided into three groups—the Dutch group, called *Doopsgezinde* or *Mennonites*; the Moravian *Hutterites*; and the Swiss *Brethren*, usually called the old *Evangelical Täufer*, or *Taufgesinnte*.

Of the classification by modern historians that by Newman⁶ is as good as any. Newman mentions only a few groups. Among these—the *Chiliastic Anabaptists*, in which he includes the Melchiorites, as well as the Münsterites; the *Soundly Biblical Anabaptists*, composed of the Swiss Brethren, and their followers in south Germany, the Moravian Hutterites, and the Mennonites; the *Pantheistic* in which he places David Joris; the *Mystical*, where we find Hans Denk and Ludwig Hetzer; and the *Antitrinitarians*.

AFTER MUENSTER

The fall of Münster, whetting as it did the appetite of the ruling authorities for persecution, and intensifying the determination to root out every vestige of Anabaptism, good and bad, completely drove the movement under cover in the Low countries; and all but exterminated the fanatical wing of the party. Not all at once, however. The Münster spirit still lingered on for a time in a number of places. Under a new leader, Jan van Batenburg, a former burgomaster of Steenwijk, polygamy, the right of revolution, and the near approach of the new Jerusalem was upheld by these small groups as vigorously as ever; although no immediate attempt was made to establish another Münster. The Melchiorites remained for a time as strong as ever, though oppressed; but soon the conservative wing, the Obbenites, disagreeing with the Melchiorites in their immediate millenarian expectations, were gaining at the expense of all the others.

It now occurred to some one, just who made the first suggestion is not known, but perhaps David Joris, to call a convention of the different factions to attempt a

⁶ A. H. Newman, a *Manual of Church History*.

reconciliation of their various views. The conference was held in the summer of 1536 in the Westphalian town of Bocholt near the Dutch border. None of the leaders of the various factions graced the meeting with their presence except David Joris himself; who was easily the dominating spirit of the whole affair, Many Batenburgers, however, were present, as were also some of the Melchiorites. Perhaps not many of the Obbenites. The chief issue under discussion was the relation of the Christian toward the new Israel—was he permitted to use the sword to bring about the new order? The Batenburgers said, yes; the Melchiorites and Obbenites said, No. Joris now, who had formerly been a Melchiorite, and had been ordained as a minister by Obbe Philips, tried the part of a compromiser, by suggesting that although the Batenburgers were right in their contention that the Christian might use the sword, but that the time was not yet ripe for such action. Joris no doubt won a number to his way of thinking; for soon after this we find in the records mention of a new Anabaptist sect—the Davidians. Batenburg when he heard of the results of this meeting, enraged at what he thought was a deliberate attempt on the part of Joris to gain a personal following called him an Absalom, and threatened him with personal violence.

It is not likely that the Bocholt conference succeeded very far in the attempt to harmonize the views of the different factions; for, as late as the middle of the century Countess Anne of East Friesland still recognized among the different parties, the *Batenburgers*, *Davidites*, *Obbenites* and now also the *Mennonites*. Batenburg was executed for revolutionary teachings in 1537. Joris soon developed further unsound religious theories, and was excommunicated by Obbe Philips. After a rather disreputable career, he finally found his way to Basel where under an assumed name he lived down his past, and even

won a place of honor until after his death in 1556. In course of time the various corrupt sects died out, and the non-resistant Obbenites, and no doubt many of the Melchiorites were gathered together under a new leader—Menno Simons.



MENNO SIMONS

II

MENNO SIMONS

Menno Simons, like his contemporary, Martin Luther, was of peasant origin, having been born in 1496 in a little Frisian village called Witmarsum, located a few miles inland from the North Sea coast. Of his early life we know little beyond what he himself has left us in a brief autobiographical sketch written in his later years. Evidently he was early destined for the church, for in his twenty-eighth year he assumed the duties of the priesthood in what was then his father's village Pinjum, a mile or two seaward from his own birthplace. His preparation was not extensive, perhaps just enough to meet the simple requirements of a country priest. He knew a little Latin, less Greek, and, according to his own confession, no Scripture. Later in life, however, through wide reading, he acquired not only a minute knowledge of the Bible, but rather a broad acquaintance with the general field of church history as well.

Early Priesthood

As a priest Menno likely lived the life of his class—an easy going, care-free life, assuming the burdens of his office rather lightheartedly. Like his companions he spent his days, he says, in “playing, drinking, and all manner of frivolous diversions.” Like them in all but one very unusual respect—he was blessed with an open mind and a tender conscience. Such being the case, he could not remain entirely oblivious to the revolutionary

religious movements that were then shaking all northern Europe to its very foundations. It is known that quite early in his ecclesiastical career he had access to the writings of Luther which were being surreptitiously circulated throughout the Dutch monasteries and among the Dutch priests in spite of every effort on the part of the higher state and church authorities to suppress them. He began to waver in the faith.

Doubts

The seed of doubt fell upon promising soil. One day while Menno was perfunctorily handling the bread and wine in the celebration of a mass, the thought flashed through his mind that this bit of bread could not possibly be the flesh of Christ as he had always been taught to believe. At first he gave the suggestion but little thought, ascribing it to the work of the devil in an attempt to lure a good man away from his faith. But it came back to him again and again. He prayed, and sighed and confessed, but all to no avail. The conviction grew. Finally he was driven to the source of help to which he should have gone in the first place—the New Testament, which up to this time, he said, had been a sealed book to him. Here, finally “without any human aid or advice” he found relief from his doubts. The bread was not the body of Christ. His conscience was relieved; and he was greatly encouraged in the belief “that no human authority can bind to eternal death.”

But once led to question the validity of a cardinal doctrine of the church, the way was opened to other doubts. Not long after this, Menno heard of the beheading at Leeuwarden, the capitol city of the province, of one Sicke Freerks, a tailor, because of rebaptism. A second baptism seemed a strange doctrine to the troubled priest. Thus far he had never doubted the validity of

infant baptism. But now he again turned to the New Testament for light; and was surprised that he could find no justification there for the doctrine. He consulted his superior at Pinjum, who was also forced to admit that there was no direct Scriptural authority for the practise. Menno then turned to Luther, Zwingli and Bullinger; and finding that all these differed not only from one another in their justification of the doctrine but from the whole New Testament teaching on the question as well, he was forced to the conclusion that infant baptism, too, was an error without Scriptural foundation.

Although convinced that his church taught erroneous views on two important religious doctrines, yet Menno had no thought of immediately withdrawing from it, or of laying down his priestly office. He had been promoted in the meantime to a more honorable and lucrative position at Witmarsum, his native village, and the future seemed promising. In view of these bright prospects it is not difficult to understand why just at this particular time he was slow to follow his growing convictions to their logical conclusions. It was about this time, too, that Anabaptists of various types began to appear in the vicinity of Witmarsum, and soon after, disciples of Jan Matthys from Münster. The new parish priest, who evidently had considerable ability as a speaker and writer, now eased his conscience somewhat and exercised his talents by a vigorous attack upon the latter, gaining quite a reputation among his fellow priests for his ability to successfully refute the false prophets from Münster. "The report spread far abroad, that I could readily silence these persons," he said. "All looked to me."

But the troubled conscience of this sincere pastor of Witmarsum would not permit him long to live under false pretence. When he saw that his attack upon the errors of the Münsterites was interpreted by his friends as

a wholehearted endorsement of the entire Catholic system, he was disturbed in spirit. Attracted by worldly success, and at the same time convicted by a tender conscience, he evidently hoped for a time to serve both God and Mammon. Although not yet completely a follower of the peaceful Anabaptists, still he knew that at heart he agreed with some of their teachings, although he bitterly opposed the erroneous views of the Münsterites. His heart was sorely troubled.

The Tragedy at Bolsward

Not long after this there occurred at Bolsward, not far from Witmarsum, another impressive incident, the third in the course of Menno's gradual conversion, which had a decisive influence upon his future career. A group of some three hundred Anabaptists, men, women and children, somewhat tainted with the revolutionary theories of Münster, had taken refuge in an old cloister where they were attacked by a small force which had been sent against them by the Provincial governor. These poor deluded enthusiasts took up arms in self defence, but were soon overpowered and most of them, including Menno's own brother, were put to the sword. Only the surviving women and children were spared.

This catastrophe, occurring almost at his own door, and claiming a member of his own family, made a profound impression upon the future leader of the Dutch Anabaptists. The courage of these men and women, who, although in error, dared to face death itself for their convictions disturbed his ease loving conscience; while the need to combat the very errors that were at the bottom of their undoing appealed strongly to his sense of responsibility for the welfare of the weak and erring. "Reflecting upon these things," he says:

"My soul was so grieved that I could no longer endure it, I thought to myself—I, miserable man, what shall I do? If I continue in this way and live not agreeable to the word of the Lord, according to the knowledge of the truth which I have obtained; if I do not rebuke to the best of my ability the hypocrisy, the impenitent, carnal life, the perverted baptism, the Lord's Supper; and the false worship of God which the learned teach; if I through bodily fear, do not show them the true foundation of the truth, neither use all my powers to direct the wandering flock, who would gladly do their duty if they knew it, to the true pastures of Christ—O how shall their shed blood, though in error, rise against me in the judgment of the Almighty, and pronounce sentence against my poor miserable soul."

Renunciation of the Papacy

Menno Simons was now ready for the final step. In the month of January of 1536, he laid down his priestly office, renounced the Catholic church, shut the door on a brilliant career, a life of ease and pleasure; and deliberately chose instead a life of uncertainty, misery, and poverty, constantly threatened with imprisonment, persecution, and death; but at the same time a life of loyalty to his convictions and great service to his fellow men; and of peace with his God. Without in the least belittling the services to the world of men like Luther and Calvin, it must be kept in mind, nevertheless, when comparing their choice with that of Menno Simons', that they made no personal sacrifice in the work they undertook. They never left the church; they rather transformed the machinery and remained at the head of it. They never renounced fat salaries, and positions of ease; they were never despised, but on the contrary highly honored by rulers, both state and church. Menno Simons on the other hand, deliberately chose the way of the cross. For the rest of his days he remained an outlaw, and with his wife and children a wanderer upon the face of the earth,

a reward upon his head. Even those who dared give him and his family food and shelter paid for their kindness with their lives.

Referring later in life to this contrast Menno says,

"For eighteen years now I, my poor feeble wife and little children have endured extreme anxiety, oppression, affliction, misery, and persecution; and at the peril of my life have been compelled everywhere to live in fear and seclusion; yea, while the state ministers repose on beds of ease and of soft pillows, we generally have to hide ourselves in secluded corners; while they appear at weddings and banquets with great pomp, with pipe and lute, we must be on guard when the dogs bark lest the captors be on hand. Whilst they are saluted as doctors, lords, and teachers on every hand, we have to hear that we are ana-baptists, hedge preachers, deceivers and heretics, and must be saluted in the name of the devil. In short while they are gloriously rewarded for their services with large incomes and easy times, our recompence and portion must be fire, sword, and death."

This converted parish priest, it will thus be observed, arrived at his conclusions and convictions through a gradual process, by his own volition, and as a result of an independent study of the Scriptures. He was not swept from his moorings by the enthusiasm of a great popular religious uprising. He seemingly had every earthly reason to remain within his church, and none to withdraw from it—except one, his conscience. In a way he typified the whole Anabaptist movement. Ana-baptism, as we know, was not merely the reappearance of earlier evangelical sects, but rather a spontaneous religious movement among the common people having its source in a widely read Bible, newly turned into the vernacular.

Baptized by Obbe Philips

Just what Menno Simons did for the few months following his public renunciation of the Catholic church

is not definitely known. Seemingly he boldly proclaimed his new found faith. So long as he did not openly affiliate with the proscribed Anabaptist group, now rapidly spreading through the land, he might still safely do this without much danger of persecution. But his beliefs were so nearly identical with the prevailing views of that group that affiliation with them sooner or later was inevitable. It was not long, before the close of the year, until he was compelled to leave his native province, and seek refuge across the border in Groningen, where there was still a semblance of religious toleration. Here he was baptized by Obbe Philips, the leader at this time of the Dutch non-resistant Anabaptists. Like Luther and other Reformation leaders who had once been priests, Menno took unto himself a wife soon after leaving the order, a certain Gertrude, likely from his own native village, who for the rest of her days remained a faithful companion through all the vicissitudes of his precarious life, and shared with him all the dangers and hardships that were his.

Ordination

Hardly had Menno cast his lot with the Groningen Anabaptists when the heads of that movement, recognizing his ability as a leader, urged him to submit to ordination as an elder in the organization. But true to form, Menno refused to assume the responsibilities of leadership, hesitating as he says, because of his

“limited talents, great ignorance, weak nature, timidity of flesh, the unbounded wickedness, perversity of the world, the powerful sects, subtlety of different minds, and the heavy cross”

that would oppress him if he should accept the urgent

solicitations of his friends. But on the other hand when he thought

“of the miserable, starving condition, and the necessity of these pious God fearing children, who erred as innocent sheep having no shepherd”

his compassion for his misguided fellow beings overcame his natural timidity, and he finally permitted himself to be ordained a full fledged elder by the same Obbe Philips who had baptized him a short time before.

Outlawed

For the next six years or so Menno, together with his co-laborers, Obbe and Dirk, two brothers, remained in Groningen, earnestly laboring in behalf of his chosen cause — preaching, baptizing, writing, ordaining other elders and organizing the growing church. Occasionally he made a secret visit to the neighboring provinces including his own fatherland Friesland, where, in 1542, an imperial edict, drawn up at Leeuwarden, and carrying the name of Emperor Charles V, was issued against him. According to this decree no one was to receive “Minne Symonsz” in his house or on his property, give him shelter, food or drink, or even speak with him, or read any of his books under penalty of loss of property and life as a heretic. To any one who might apprehend the fugitive a reward of one hundred Gulden was promised, a sum equal to the annual salary of a priest at Witmarsum. In case the informant was an Anabaptist he would be granted full pardon for having been a member of that sect, or for “lesser crimes.” It was no doubt the singling out of Menno for special attention that caused him to leave Groningen, in 1543, for East Friesland, where the edicts of Charles did not have the binding power they had in the Netherlands.

Obbe's Defection

It was during this period, about 1540, that Menno experienced a great disappointment in the withdrawal of Obbe Philips from the Anabaptist cause. Just why Obbe withdrew at this time is not certain. Some say that he no longer had the courage to face the increasing dangers that threatened the lives of the leaders of the cause; others are unkind enough to suggest that he was jealous of the growing influence of his disciple Menno Simons. He himself asserts that he had been deceived in his call to the ministry; that, since the disciples of Jan Matthys, by whom he had been ordained, had themselves been in error, his own call, as well as that of those whom he in turn had ordained was not apostolic nor valid.

Likely Obbe had neither the faith nor the courage of his brother Dirk or of Menno. He perhaps had shared the hopes of the Melchiorites that soon the kingdom of the elect was to be established, when the righteous would enter upon their reward. Now Hoffman was languishing in prison at Strasburg, Jan Matthys had met a tragic death, and the righteous everywhere were being crushed out with fire and sword. The future seemed hopeless. Obbe felt himself deceived. What is the use, he may have thought, like many another leader of a forlorn cause before him. He had neither the faith nor the heart to continue the struggle. He retired to the city of Rostock on the Baltic where, if he kept his opinions to himself, he might spend his days without molestation. At any rate his withdrawal, though by no means a death blow to the cause, nevertheless, was a great disappointment to Menno who spoke of Obbe as a Demas, and as one who gave great comfort to the state churches by his defection. Obbe Philips now drops completely out of Anabaptist history.

In East Friesland, Menno Simons was safe from

molestation for a time. Countess Anna, the ruler at this time, was well disposed toward the Reformation movement, though the exact nature of the church she hoped to establish under her rule had not yet been fully decided upon. It was during this transition stage that East Friesland became an asylum for the persecuted religious groups of northwestern Germany and Holland, even the Batenburgers and other offshoots of the Münsterites being tolerated. The outstanding event of Menno's stay here was his debate with John a'Lasco, the Polish reformer, who had been responsible for Anna's religious establishment.

Debate with a'Lasco

This debate, initiated by a'Lasco himself, the outstanding Reformation leader of northern Europe, was held in Emden, the chief seaport of northwestern Germany, and incidently the seat of the oldest Mennonite church of this whole region. The discussion, which lasted for three days, centered about the main issue which separated the Anabaptists from the state churches—baptism and its allied doctrines, to which were added several others, the calling of ministers and the doctrine of the incarnation.

On the question of baptism, Menno advanced the well-known arguments familiar to all Anabaptists, while a'Lasco reviewed the common ground held by all the state churches. On the calling of the ministers also both covered familiar ground already so frequently advanced by earlier champions in various discussions. A'Lasco favored a theologically trained, state controlled ministry, well fed and clothed at public expense. Menno, on the other hand, advocated a ministry selected from the congregation without reference to theological training, but of a regenerated life, and supported by voluntary con-

tributions. He was especially bitter against the benefices, fat livings, and exalted positions of the state preachers of the Gospel whom he often spoke of as hirelings.

Menno on the Incarnation

On Menno's view of the incarnation it is necessary to say a few words further; for his theories on this subject were not held by his brethren in Switzerland in that day, nor by those who bear his name anywhere in the world today. His view was not original with him, but was inherited from Obbe Philips, who in turn got it from Melchior Hoffman, so far as we know its first advocate. Hoffman's peculiar doctrine needs but little elaboration here. He believed, it will be remembered, that Jesus in order to remain entirely free from sinfulness had to receive his body elsewhere than through the flesh of Mary. This view held by all the Anabaptists throughout these regions was especially unacceptable to Menno at first; and according to some writers on this subject was perhaps the chief cause of his hesitancy in joining the Anabaptist movement. But once he accepted it, he became its consistent advocate to the end. In his attempts to justify his peculiar explanation of the doctrine, Menno often ventured into biological and philosophical arguments beyond his depth. It would no doubt have been better for him as well as all concerned had he followed the advice of his south German brethren, who in a conference held at Strasburg, in 1555, suggested, relative to this controversy

"The confusion of tongues has come upon the brethren in this matter because they would know more than it was intended they should know."

They should be content, so these practical Germans thought, with the statement "The word became flesh and

tabernacled among us." This should be said, however, in behalf of Menno, he discussed the subject reluctantly, and never chose it for public debate unless forced to it; and it was just as reasonable an attempt, perhaps, to reconcile the divinity of Jesus with his humanity as was the orthodox explanation.

Because of the publicity attracted by this Emden debate, Menno found it expedient, in 1544, to seek a new refuge. It was just at this time, too, that Anna, urged by her neighboring rulers had agreed upon an order of exile against the various sects that had found temporary refuge within her domain. Acting upon the suggestion of a'Lasco, however, she made a distinction between the peaceful followers of Menno and the revolutionary sects of Batenburg and others. The former, who for the first time were now designated as *Menists*, were not included in the general proscription.

Cologne and Wismar

Menno, however, thought it best to leave East Friesland. For the next two years he found a fruitful field of labor in the Archbishopric of Cologne, where under a tolerant ruler, a spell of liberty was granted to all religious dissenters. He even challenged the theologians of the city of Bonn to a theological discussion, without success however. The restoration of a Romanist ruler, in 1546, again sent him on his travels, this time to the Lutheran Hanseatic free city of Wismar on the Baltic. It was during his stay here that he again met his old friend a'Lasco, though not in a personal debate this time. The latter, who had been forced to leave Emden during the period of the Interim, 1548-1552, had served as the pastor of a flock of Dutch and north German refugees in London during that time. With the accession of Bloody Mary to the English throne in 1553, England ceased to

be an asylum for continental Protestants; but with the Peace of Passau on the other hand, a year earlier, conditions had been reversed in Germany. The Protestant exiles consequently returned to their former homes. It was while a ship load of a'Lasco's followers were seeking a new refuge along the Baltic that, one mid-winter day, they got caught in the ice in Wismar harbor a short distance from shore. But Wismar happened to be a Lutheran town, with little sympathy for Zwinglians. It remained, therefore, for the little Mennonite congregation of the place, barely tolerated themselves, to play the part of the good Samaritan to these ice-bound exiles. They visited the strangers on ship board, brought them food and drink, and needed medical supplies; and then helped them to shore and found needed work for them for the winter.

One little incident in the course of this procedure surprised and greatly pained Menno. A humble, but warm hearted Mennonite, having compassion on the children of a'Lasco, offered to take them into his home and care for them for the winter, but was refused by their tutor, one of the leaders of the party, and a minister, a certain Hermes Backreel on the ground that a'Lasco being of noble birth, and having much to do with lords, could not afford to have his children cared for in the home of a humble Mennonite. "I observed," said Menno on hearing of this incident, "that we have not met with the plain true, humble pilgrims of Christ."

Another Debate

Distressing as the situation of the London exiles was, however, it was not sufficiently so to cool the ardor of their leaders for a theological controversy even with their deliverers. Hardly had they been safely landed before Hermes Backreel, learning that Menno Simons was living

in seclusion in the city, sought him out and invited him to a theological debate in the presence of a group of Reformed and Mennonite listeners. Menno hesitated, but finally gave his consent. Hermes, not considering himself a match for Menno sent to Norden for Martin Micron, a renowned Dutch theologian, who had also been one of the London preachers, and whom the late Professor Dosker, of the Presbyterian Seminary of Louisville, describes as

“a man small of stature, but contentious to a degree, always aching for a debate, always urging some disputation, and of course always considering himself the victor.”

The debate lasted for several days, covering all the controversial points of doctrine. At times the argument became quite heated, but ended peaceably enough with a common meal. As was usual with discussions of this sort neither side was convinced, but both were satisfied with themselves.

Menno accused the Reformed party of unfair dealing in this debate. He entered the discussion reluctantly, he said, and with the understanding that it was to be a private affair, without publicity; and that the proceedings were not to be reported to the town authorities. The Mennonites, it is understood, were merely a tolerated people in this Lutheran town, to be left in peace so long as they carried on their worship in seclusion. Publicity would jeopardize their stay in the city. But contrary to the agreement, Micron and his friends broke their promise. A report of the proceedings was published, with the result that soon after, the Reformed as well as the Mennonites had to leave the city. Both of the disputants later continued their arguments in print in which neither did himself great credit. Quite as much heat as light was generated by the uncomplimentary adjectives that were hurled back and forth in the printed pages; though

it must be admitted that Menno's language was much milder than was Martin's.

Literary Efforts

In fact, Menno was a voluminous writer throughout this entire period. Most of his literary work consisted of an amplification of his arguments first presented in such debates as noted above, short treatises on the various distinctive Anabaptist doctrines, and replies to attacks made upon him by the various theologians of the day. He often found it difficult to secure publishers for his works, since to print his books was made a criminal offence by imperial edict, punishable by death. Among his most important writings are his *Testimony against Jan van Leiden*, written while still a priest; *Renunciation of Rome*, in which he gives his reasons for leaving the Catholic church; *The Foundation Book*, written early in his ministry, but revised in 1555, in which can be found a complete statement of his mature religious views; and his comments on the *Twenty-fifth Psalm*, perhaps from a purely literary point of view by far his best work. His writings were collected and published soon after his death, and were published in several editions during the seventeenth century, the last time in the Netherlands in 1681. Menno's pre-eminence among the leaders of the Anabaptist movement in his day, and his dominating influence among their later followers is, no doubt, due more to his literary efforts than to any other cause.

Internal Dissensions

Unfortunately Menno Simons and his brethren were not only forced to defend themselves against enemies from without, but too often there was contention within. As early as 1547 he met Dirk Philips and a number of

leading evangelists of the Baltic region for the purpose of disciplining two of their brethren who had drifted from the fundamentals—Adam Pastor, accused of anti-trinitarianism; and Franz de Cuiper, charged with pro-Catholic views. But before disposing of this trial it may not be out of place here first to introduce Menno's co-laborers.

Adam Pastor, earlier known as Roelof Martens, was a Westphalian by birth, a Roman priest, who left his order about the time Menno did. He was ordained with several others in the early forties by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. A man of broad education and training, "of medium height and without a beard" he was inclined to independent thinking. From the first he disagreed with Menno and Dirk in his interpretation of the doctrine of the incarnation, and later developed liberal theories of the trinity. According to a recent historian, who bases his charges upon Pastor's own writings, the latter

"denied the trinity, the pre-existence of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost. He evinced little sympathy with Paul, whose doctrine of salvation was apparently repugnant to him. Christ, His life, His words,—that is the content of his religion. He was totally averse to the Münster spirit, evidently a man of a clean life and a kindly disposition. He sided with the other Anabaptists in the rejection of infant baptism; but was against the overvaluation of adult baptism on faith. However, he condemned the position of the David Jorists, who, although they called themselves Anabaptists, permitted infant baptism, because they had no faith in any external application of the sacrament."¹

Such was Adam Pastor at the time of the Emden meeting.

Of Franz de Cuiper not much is known except that he, too, was one of Menno's appointees to the eldership, being ordained perhaps with Pastor; and that he refused to accept the prevailing Mennonite view of the incarna-

1 H. E. Dosker. *"The Dutch Anabaptists."*

tion and other leading doctrines. He retained a strong leaning toward Catholicism in all his religious thinking; and for that reason was placed under the ban by Menno against whom he later filed many charges with the ruling authorities in Holland.

About the same time, 1542, Menno and Dirk, the senior elders, ordained three others to this high position—Hendrick van Vreden, Antonius von Koeln, and Gillis von Aachen. Of van Vreden we know nothing except that he, too, proved faithless to his calling, and joined the party of Pastor.

Antonius von Koeln began his Anabaptist career in Münster, being baptized by Roll in the house of Knipperdoling. He somehow survived the Münster catastrophe, but whether he left before or after the fall of the city is not certain. Likely before, however, for he soon cleared himself of all revolutionary taint, and became one of the most energetic workers for the cause of the non-resistant type of Anabaptism in northwestern Germany. He never agreed with Menno's strict views of discipline, and, about 1550, he either was placed under the ban or voluntarily withdrew from the Mennonite movement.

Gillis von Aachen became an Anabaptist as early as 1531. As an elder he later travelled extensively through Holland and northwestern Germany, baptizing it is said more martyrs than any of the other leaders of the movement. He must have been of a vacillating character, for in 1552, Menno placed him under the ban because of a moral lapse, to be reinstated, however, two years later upon confession of guilt. While engaged in evangelistic work, he was apprehended in Antwerp in 1557. Under torture he recanted, which cost him his place in van Braght's Martyr book, although space was given to many of those who were baptized by him. But recantation availed Gillis nothing. His right arm was

cut off at the time of execution, and his body thrown into the flames. Some years before, he had been described as "a man of medium size, with a pale face, big eyes, and a pointed brown beard." One of his sons later became a minister in Amsterdam; and his grandson was the well-known Doctor Galenus Abrahams de Haan.

Co-Laborers

None of these co-laborers of Menno just mentioned, strange to say, remained faithful to the end. All at one time or another had been placed under the ban, and but one or two reinstated. Only two of his contemporaries shared with him to the end the responsibilities of guiding the new church through the dangers of the formative years—Leonard Bouwens, and Dirk Philips, already frequently mentioned.

Leonard Bouwens, a Dutchman, was born at Sommeldyk, in 1515, and died at Hoorn in 1582. After spending some years as an Anabaptist preacher, he was ordained an elder by Menno Simons in Emden, 1551. He was, perhaps, the most energetic and successful evangelist among the entire group of northern leaders. During his long service as an elder he baptized in Friesland, Holland, Groningen, Brabant and several other Dutch provinces more than ten thousand converts in the course of some thirty years. Considering the fact that this period includes the time when Duke Alva and his Council of Blood was literally combing these provinces for heretics, this is a most remarkable and courageous record. Bouwens was a strict disciplinarian, and was, perhaps, largely personally responsible for the division that occurred within the ranks of the churches because of the strict application, during this time, of the ban. But even he did not escape church discipline, being relieved of his office by Dirk Philips; but upon the death of the latter

he resumed his office on his own initiative, and retained it to the end.

Next to Menno, himself, the most influential of the Anabaptist leaders was Dirk Philips, who was born at Leeuwarden, trained for the priesthood, won for the Anabaptist cause of Pieter Houtsager, a disciple of Jan Matthys, and in 1536 ordained as an elder by his brother Obbe. Dirk was Menno's most intimate associate in all the important activities of the Mennonite movement, although a little more conservative than the latter on most of the religious practises common to the faith. Like Menno, too, he wrote numerous treatises and tracts on fundamental doctrines, the most extensive being his *Enchiridion*, which remains perhaps the most typical treatise of the conservative Anabaptism of his day. This work was printed in English for the first time in America in 1910 for the use of the Old Order Amish, among whom Dirk is still popular because of his strong advocacy of two doctrines still in practise among these people—avoidance, and footwashing. In his later days Dirk is described as “an old man with white hair, of medium stature, dressed in black, with a round cap, and he talked the dialect of the Brabanters.” He died in 1568.

These three—Menno, Dirk and Leonard, were the stalwart, unyielding, uncompromising defenders of a rigid reorganized Anabaptist faith, holding fast to the established doctrines to the end, banning all who showed the least desire to stray from the narrow path of orthodoxy as interpreted by them, and hardly able to keep from banning one another. Some sort of division of the field of labor was seemingly agreed upon among them. Dirk resided at Danzig; Menno at Wismar and later in Wuestenfeld; while Leonard made his headquarters at Emden, though his chief field of effort was in the northern Dutch provinces. All of them, however, found their way

occasionally into the Netherlands which remained by far the most fruitful area in results. The congregations of northern Germany remained small and few.

Rigid Disciplinary Measures

All the above mentioned leaders were present at the Emden meeting in 1547. Pastor and Cuiper were disciplined, and finally banned for their liberal views on the trinity, and Catholic doctrine of the incarnation, and it was decided to enforce Dirk's strict interpretation of the ban and avoidance.

The free use of these measures of discipline had by this time become a question of considerable controversy among the Mennonites all through the Low Countries. That the practise was driven to unjustifiable lengths there can be no doubt; but a better understanding of the conditions under which Menno worked will lead to a keener appreciation at least, if not a fuller justification, of the reasons for these rather harsh measures. The central doctrine of Menno's faith, as already observed, was the "new birth," a regenerated life. "Behold worthy reader," he says,

"All those who are born of God with Christ who thus conform their weak life to the Gospel, are thus converted and follow the example of Christ, hear and believe his holy Word, follow his commands, which He in plain words commanded us in the Holy Scriptures, for the Holy Christian Church which has the promise."

True religion, in other words, is not merely a set of dogmas and practises; it must bear fruit in a purified life. Menno's most bitter Philippics were hurled not at the beliefs of his state church opponents, but rather at their unfruitful and corrupt lives. It is a well known fact among the historians of the Reformation that the morals of neither laity nor clergy were reformed im-

mediately by the general Reformation movement. As the respect for the old established supports of the social order were undermined, moral standards during the transition period actually sank to a lower level. A popular couplet which went the rounds of the people clearly illustrates, Menno says, the prevailing ideals of license and liberty—*Der Strick ist entzwei; Und wir sind frei.*²

To Menno and his followers on the other hand the Reformation called, not for lower, but for higher standards of living "I know of a certainty," he says,

"That a proud haughty man, whoever he may be, is no Christian: neither is an avaricious, selfish man, or a drunken, intemperate man, or an unchaste, lustful man, or a wrangling envious or disobedient, idolatrous man, or a false, lying, or an unfaithful, thievish man, or a defaming, backbiting man, or a blood thirsty, unmerciful, revengeful man a Christian, even if he were baptized a hundred times, and kept the Lord's supper daily; for it is not the ordinances or rites, such as baptism and the supper, but a true Christian faith with its unblamable good fruits of which the ordinances testify, that makes a true Christian and has the promise of life."

The Christian church made up, according to Menno's ideal, of the regenerated, and not of the entire population, must be without "spot or wrinkle," pure and undefiled, not only in belief but in moral conduct as well. There must be no moral lapse. The Mennonites made the way of life straight and narrow. The state churches left it broad and open. The latter had no way of correcting gross sin; that was a function of the state, not of the church, so they said.

The only means of discipline by which a free, voluntary church could be kept up to such a high standard

² The original, of course, is in Dutch. This is taken from a German translation. An alliterative rendering of Luther's version of Psalm 124:7.

was the ban, through which the unworthy and unfaithful could be excluded and expelled. Against the corrupt sects of the time, as Menno calls them, the *Davidians*, *Batenburgers*, and the *Münsterites*, who were trying to make inroads among the disciples of Menno, a strict application of the ban was the only adequate defence. *The Jewel of the Church* he lovingly calls this means of preserving his beloved little flock against the enemies within the gates.

This method of settling church controversies and of disciplining unruly members, which was based on Matthew 18:15-18, might be applied in three different forms, according to the seriousness of the fault—mere admonition, with hopes of a reconciliation; denial of access to the communion table; and expulsion from membership for gross sin. Several controversies soon arose among the brethren over the use of this means of discipline. Shall a gross sinner be first admonished and given time for repentance before expulsion, as in the case of one guilty of a minor fault, or shall he be expelled immediately after his guilt is established. Leonard Bouwens, the strictest of the strict said, yes, to the latter question; the others, favored leniency.

Avoidance

But more serious even than this difference was the controversy over another practise which followed the ban, called *Avoidance*, by which the one excommunicated was to be “avoided” or ostracized by his former fellow members, not only in religious fellowship, but in all business and social relations as well. Scripturally this practise was based on the Pauline injunction “not to eat” with an unfaithful member (I Cor. 5:11), in order, according to such confessions of faith as advocated it, that he “may be made ashamed and thereby induced to amend

his ways." The motive here was most worthy, but unfortunately it was based on poor psychology. But here, too, there were differences of opinion. What did the phrase "not to eat" mean? Did it refer to the communion table only, or to all social relations? Most of the leaders said the latter. How generally should the practise be applied? Could any exceptions be made? Should husband and wife shun one another in case one or the other should be placed under the ban? Again Bouwens said, yes, and would even include bed and board; Dirk agreed with him; Menno on the other hand wavered at first, but being threatened by Bouwens with the ban himself if he did not side in with the conservatives, he half-heartedly consented to join the strict banners, a fact which in his later years he regretted.^{2a} He could never quite give his hearty consent to this practise. The consciences of the parties concerned, he said, should rule in the matter.

These hard regulations of the conjugal relations seem all the more strange when we remember that among the Mennonites the institution of marriage was a sacred one. Not quite so sacred, perhaps, as among the Catholics who made it a sacrament, but certainly much more sacred than with Luther, who said, "Marriage is an outward carnal thing like other worldly matters. Just as I may eat, drink, walk, ride, buy, and talk with the heathen, Jew or Turk and heretic, so may I also enter the married life with him and remain therein." To the Mennonites who, so to say, took a middle view, this was rank heresy. Marriage could be contracted only "in the Lord," which meant among members of the same faith, here Anabaptists. Marriage with outsiders was punishable with the ban. Divorce and separation were permitted only conditionally, and on New Testament grounds. But sacred

2a. Some American Mennonite historians question the reliability of the source of this story.

as the institution was among the Mennonites, it was not exempt among the conservatives from the blighting influences of the "avoidance." Whether the practise was maintained because of, or in spite of the sacredness of the marriage tie may be a debatable question. Its chief excuse perhaps was the lack of literal Scriptural ground for its exemption, though there were plenty of social grounds. Mixed marriages were opposed, of course, because they were not "in the Lord," and incidently because they would threaten the integrity of the church.

These various questions had disturbed the brethren not a little for some years. They were discussed, as we have seen, at the Emden meeting of 1547, and at later conferences, and finally at Wismar in 1554, when a number of the leaders laid down a set of rules on these as well as other subjects for the use of the churches. According to these rules, marriage with outsiders was forbidden; separation was permitted only in case one or the other party led an immoral life; marital avoidance was to be enforced in its most rigid form; business relations to be carried on with an apostate only in cases of extreme necessity; children were advised to marry only with the consent of their parents; just debts might be collected, but no unusual pressure was to be applied in doing so; bearing arms in military service was strictly prohibited; and finally no one was to preach unless duly ordained by the proper church authorities.

An Unfortunate Division

The attempt to enforce these hard rules raised a storm in certain quarters. Leonard Bouwens and Gillis von Aachen decided to apply them to the letter in their jurisdictions. The trouble started when a little Dutch woman by the name of Zwaantje Rutgers, with notions

of her own, refused to deny her banned husband "bed and table" according to the regulations. Bouwens insisted. Zwaantje had some friends. A division soon appeared in several of the congregations, especially Emden and Franeker. The factions appealed to Menno, who advised moderation, suggesting that the consciences of the parties concerned should govern in the matter. But all to no avail. Bouwens and his party insisted on enforcement, banning to the right and left all those who disagreed with him, even threatening Menno himself. The two churches were rent in twain, and the division was carried to other churches until the whole Lowland region was aflame with the controversy. The strict party was sometimes called the party of the "Hard Banners"; while the milder group came to be known as the "Mild Banners."

This controversy even reached the Anabaptists of south Germany. In two conferences held in Strasburg, in 1555 and 1557, the Germans and Swiss discussed both the peculiar view of the Dutch Mennonites on the incarnation, as well as their strict interpretation of the ban and avoidance. On both questions they disagreed with their Dutch brethren.

In order to learn of the true situation in the Low Countries and also to attempt a reconciliation of the two factions, the latter conference sent a delegation of three men to Menno's home for the purpose of learning his views on the matter, and then with this information to visit the various Dutch congregations in an effort to establish harmony. But these men failed so utterly in their designs that their well meant efforts ended only in still greater confusion, and the situation was made worse rather than better. Not only did the breach among the Dutch congregations remain, but now was added a new cleavage—between the Dutch and the German churches.

Declining Years

Menno Simons was greatly disturbed by these events in his declining years, and travelled extensively among the disaffected congregations in the interests of harmony, but to no avail. Near the close of his life it is said he regretted having agreed to the strict interpretation of the ban; and to have advised his close friends not to be a "slave of men" as he had been.

In the meantime, in 1555, the Anabaptist congregation at Wismar was exiled by a general order of the Lutheran Hanseatic League of which that city was a member. Menno, weary and discouraged, chose as a final resting place the little Anabaptist village of *Wuestenfeld*, a few miles beyond Oldesloe, in Holstein, on an estate called Fresenburg, owned by a certain count Bartholomew von Ahlefeld. This nobleman had learned of the economic worth of the Mennonites while in the Netherlands, and had invited them to settle on his estate. Here he defended them against all attempts of imperial and local authorities to persecute them. Menno was even permitted to set up a printing press of his own near a little building within the shadow of a magnificent Linden which tradition says goes back to the days of the exiled printer himself. Why this place came to be called *Wuestenfeld* (waste field) is not quite certain. An old chronicler suggests that it was because the spot on which the village was built had but a short time before been cleared of a dense forest of oak. Perhaps so. In this village, Menno died on January 13, 1561 in the sixty-sixth year of his age; and according to a custom not unknown among the Anabaptists of that day, was buried in his own garden. The exact place of burial remained unknown for many years, because during the Thirty Years War the village was destroyed and its site forgotten. But the memory

of the traditional location was kept alive among the descendants of an old Mennonite family of Hamburg that had known Menno; and later excavations seemed to corroborate the tradition. At any rate in 1902 the church at Hamburg marked the supposed spot with an appropriate monument. Wuestenfeld is a misnomer today. The monument stands upon a little knoll in the middle of a large pasture lot, bordered by magnificent groves of oak, in which, during a midsummer visit by the author some years ago, a fine herd of sleek and well-fed Holstein cattle were browsing knee deep upon a luxurious growth of rich, deep green grass.

Hero Stories

The numerous hero stories that accumulated about the name of Menno in course of time after his death no doubt, like the story of George Washington's hatchet, are based not so much on fact as upon the natural tendency of humankind to worship its heroes. The story of Menno's miraculous escape from capture one time by a shrewd answer returned from the driver's seat of a coach to the question of his would-be captors has also been told of other men. The fate that tied the tongue of a would-be betrayer who had agreed to betray Menno as he was passing by in a boat, but who was unable to utter a word until it was too late to accomplish his purpose, seems to be too good to be true. Even Menno's own recital, no doubt honestly believed, of stories of Divine vengeance visited upon his enemies may have been the result of over credulity. The clergyman who was struck dead in the pulpit while denouncing the Anabaptist leader may have died from perfectly natural causes rather than as a result of direct Divine displeasure.

Menno's Place in History

Menno Simons deserves a higher rank among the great reformers than has thus far been accorded him by writers of church history. Although he did not play as conspicuous a role as did his contemporaries—Luther, Zwingli and Calvin—his real greatness can not be measured by the more humble part he seemed to play in the religious arena of his time. His task in many respects was a much more difficult one than that of the founders of the state churches. They relied upon a union of state and church, and upon the support of the strong arm of the political powers to maintain their system. Menno, on the other hand, rested his appeal upon the persuasive power of love and the simple truth of the Gospel as sufficient to secure the permanency of the true church. He was centuries ahead of his day on many of the fundamentals of religious and civil liberty which today in America and until recently at least in the more enlightened parts of Europe have been taken for granted, such as religious toleration, separation of church and state, and the desirability of universal peace. As the world grows into a realization of these great fundamental ideals, Menno Simons' place, as a pioneer, will become more and more secure.³

Menno Simons, it will be observed, was not the founder of a new church, but merely the leader, perhaps the most influential during a critical period of a movement already well under way. It was quite common then, as now, for religious groups to take the name of their leaders. Lutheranism itself is no exception. The Anabaptist parties followed the same rule. Among the earliest were the *Melchiorites*, the *Obbenites*, and the *Dirkites*. The term *Menist* was first used, as noted else-

3 This was written before the advent of Hitler in Germany.

where, by Countess Anna of East Friesland in 1544 as a distinguishing term between the peaceful and the revolutionary Anabaptist parties.

The Name Mennonite

The peaceful followers of Menno were especially averse to being called *Wederdoopers*, the common term applied in the Low Countries to all who practised adult baptism of whatever party, and that for two reasons. First, because the word implied an earlier baptism; but since the Mennonites did not recognize the validity of infant baptism, they maintained that the administering of the rite in adult years upon confession of faith was the first and only true baptism, and not a rebaptism. Second, the odious term, *Wederdooper* everywhere signified *Münsterite*. And so, they were glad for any name that would set them apart from the Anabaptists of the Münster variety. *Doopsgezinde* (Baptist minded) was much less odious, and gained general acceptance among them. But for a time *Menist* was quite generally used to designate the peaceful Dutch Anabaptists. After the granting of religious toleration by William of Orange, the name *Menist* might again have fallen into disuse, had it not been revived for a time as a factional name. During the controversy over the ban with the division of the church into a strict and a liberal party, the strict faction, the *Flemish* and *Frisians*, who accepted Menno's conservative views on this question were again known as *Menists*; but the *Waterlanders*, the *Upper Germans*, and the *Young Frisians*, the liberal elements, repudiating the name of their rivals, preferred the name *Doopsgezinde*. As party strife died out during the eighteenth century, and as the Dutch churches began to depart from many of the earlier views of Menno, not only on this but on many other questions, *Doopsgezinde* came into general

use, and was finally adopted as the official title of the church as a whole.

There was little contact in the early days between the *Doopsgezinde* of Holland and the German and Swiss *Täufer*, or *Taufgesinnte*, or *Brethren*, as they preferred to be known. The term *Menist*, however, was well known, and not unpopular in the latter regions during the eighteenth century when the big-hearted Dutch Mennonites so generously helped their oppressed brethren in the Palatinate and Switzerland. *Mennonite* was not generally used, however, in these regions. In France *Anabaptist* seemingly was not unpopular. One recent writer suggests that *Mennonite* as distinguished from *Anabaptist* was especially in use in those countries in which the imperial decrees against them were effective—Germany and the Netherlands—but not Switzerland and France. But under whatever name these descendants of the peaceful Anabaptists went, they were essentially of one faith, and ultimately recognized each other as members of a common branch of the church. They recognized one another as fellow Mennonites, and that is the name by which they shall all be known in this book from now on.

III

SWITZERLAND

(AFTER 1535)

Although effectively checked as a mass movement by 1535 in Switzerland as elsewhere, Anabaptism nevertheless lingered on in secluded corners throughout all the northern cantons—Zurich, Neuenberg, Basel, Aargau, Solothurn, Appenzell and Bern, for several centuries longer. Continued and persistent persecution, however, in course of time, completely annihilated it except in a few small regions in the canton of Bern where today one still finds a limited number of small congregations in the Emmenthal and the Jura regions.

The history of the Anabaptists, or Mennonites¹ as we shall call them hereafter, in the land of their origin, the Swiss republic, supposedly the home of religious toleration, is hardly more than a long, dreary tale of bloody persecution on the one hand, and of heroic self sacrifice and sturdy devotion to religious conviction on the other, almost without parallel in the annals of all Europe. Swiss Mennonites were sent to the executioner's block until well into the seventeenth century. And after that throughout all the cantons above mentioned mandate

1 The term "Mennonite" was not used by the Swiss Brethren for several centuries, and but seldom today. But they were one people in faith with the European Mennonites of both Holland and Germany. The usual term in use among the Swiss was *Täufer*, sometimes *Wiedertäufer* by their enemies. The Swiss themselves liked the simple term *Brethren*. *Mennonite* is perhaps a better translation for *Täufer*, than the literal English Baptist; and so these Swiss Brethren will be Mennonites hereafter in this chapter.

after mandate was issued by the governing authorities directed against the liberties and lives of these peaceable and God-fearing people. Mennonites were forbidden to practise their own religion, and were commanded to attend the state church; they were ordered to have their children baptized, and to have their marriages solemnized by the regular clergy.

To the Stake and Galleys

For refusing to comply with these demands, they were fined, imprisoned, and occasionally sent to the galleys; although at the same time the Swiss authorities were buying the freedom of French Huguenots, condemned to the same service; their property was confiscated, and their children declared illegitimate, and incapable of entering into their inheritance; they were branded and whipped into exile; and if they returned, as sometimes they did, they were threatened with the death penalty. Finally upon death, they were denied burial in the common burying grounds.

As a result of these extreme measures, a number of Mennonites died in prison; a few recanted; many of them fled to other more tolerant lands. During the latter part of the sixteenth century especially, Moravia offered them a haven of refuge, as it did also to their brethren from all parts of middle Europe. In fact throughout the entire century, Swiss Mennonites went back and forth continually to the "Promised Land." It was a group of Swiss exiles, it will be remembered, on their return to their native land, who, arrested and imprisoned at Passau in Bavaria in 1537, gave us the group of hymns out of which the well known *Ausbund* later developed.² Near

2 That the mass migration of Mennonite exiles from Switzerland often taxed the hospitality of the Moravians to the limit is shown by such comments among the Moravian chroniclers

the close of the century both Bern and Zurich passed rigid laws against this migration on the ground that since many of the Mennonites who left Switzerland with their possessions, later often returned empty handed, thus occasioning a heavy loss to the local communities from which they originally migrated.³

It is a fine tribute to the sincerity of the Swiss Mennonites that in spite of all this terrible pressure there were but few recantations during this entire period; and it is a convincing example, too, of the persistence of a strongly entrenched religious idea. The persecuting authorities had little understanding of and less patience with these unyielding convictions of a hard pressed people, which they attributed to mere stubbornness of will. *Hitzkoepfe* they called them, *verdammte Irr- und Rottgeister*, and other hard names. The refusal of the latter to recant was ascribed to *Hochmut*, and still worse to *kybiger Hartneckigkeit*. Scores of the accused preferred the executioner's block to a betrayal of their innermost convictions. Van Braght, the martyrologist, is authority for the claim that by 1571 some forty Mennonites had paid the extreme price for their faith in the canton of Bern alone.

The last Bernese martyr to give his life for the cause was Hans Haslibach, of Sumiswald, whose death in 1571 is vividly recorded in the Martyr's Mirror, as well as in a long hymn found in the later editions of the *Ausbund*. In this hymn is found the whole story of this martyr, somewhat colored by the pious imagination of the nar-

as this one,

"Im Jahr 1585 kam so viel volks aus dem Schweizerland
also dasz man an etlichen orten die thor muest zu
sperrren, dan man Kundt Sy nit alle an, und auf neh-
men, doch aber wurde irer ein guetter tail angenom-
men."

3 Aargau also, in 1578 forbade prosecutive emigrants to sell their property before leaving the country.

rator—his imprisonment; torture; attempt by the state clergy to secure a recantation; the sturdy faith of the old man,

*This body you may put to death
I'll give my head but not my faith*

he said; his vision and the prophecy that at his death three signs would prove his innocence, namely that as soon as his head would be severed from his body it would leap into his hat, the sun would turn red, and the town pump would flow crimson; the fulfillment of this prophecy; and the effect upon the executioner and attendants who were now convinced that they had shed innocent blood.

This Haslibacher hymn of thirty-two long stanzas, sung as a whole, and in long meter, held a conspicuous place in the worship of the Swiss for hundreds of years, and is still sung today with little change in time or tune in numerous obscure corners in the country side in America where the Old Order Amish are found, though it is no longer sung in religious services, but, strange to say, at weddings and other festive occasions.

The last Mennonite in Zurich as well as in all Switzerland so far as the Martyr's Mirror records show, to forfeit his life for his faith was Hans Landis, who was beheaded in 1614. Landis was an influential minister, who carried on his preaching and other ministerial duties contrary to a decree of the Zurich Council. He was arrested, imprisoned and finally condemned to the Venetian galleys. But filing his chains with an instrument smuggled in to him by a friend, he escaped. Returning to his native land, he was again taken into custody. Upon being ordered into exile, he refused, replying that God gave him the same right to the land as the others, and the Earth was the

Lord's.⁴ At any rate he preferred to live in his native land; neither did he know where to go. Besides he was now old, and no longer feared death. As a result of this refusal to leave, he was condemned to death by the Great Council. The Martyr's Mirror describes Landis as "a tall, stately man with a long grey and black beard, and with a strong, manly voice."

Persecution in Zurich did not end, however, with the death of the last martyr. Imprisonment and banishment continued. Especially severe was the oppression which set in again in both Zurich and Bern during and following the Thirty Years War. All the old measures short of the death penalty were again revived. In 1657 there were one hundred and seventy Mennonites in the Zurich prisons, doomed to a *Mus und Brot* diet, with a little wine and meat on Sundays. The Martyr's Mirror, and the later editions of the *Ausbund* in an appendix gives a vivid account of the suffering of numerous Mennonites between 1635 and 1645 whose names have a familiar sound to one versed in Pennsylvania history,—such names as *Frick, Landis, Bauman, Strickler, Egly, Huber, Kolb, Hess, Meili, Haegi, Bachman, Schnebeli*, and others from Basel. And at the same time we hear such typical later Pennsylvania Amish names as Joder and Treyer. A little later an order for wholesale exile was passed by the Zurich Council. Several hundred emigrated to Alsace and the Palatinate. Emigration and deportation continued, until by 1700 there were few Mennonites left anywhere in northern Switzerland except in a few isolated communities in Basel and Neuenberg, and in the present canton of Bern.

That they were not entirely driven out of Bern as they were in Zurich was not due to any lack of diligence

⁴ Das Erdrich syge unserers Heern Gottes, und habe Man den gewalt nit Inne und andere dergestalt usz dem Land zu verschicken.

on the part of the Bernese authorities to bring about this end; for the latter, too, had decided upon a vigorous policy of extermination of these unyielding non-conformists. In 1659, after repeated efforts to bring the Mennonites into submission to the state church a general decree of exile was passed by the Bernese Council ordering all those who would not conform to be "utterly banished" from the country; and if they should return unconverted be "publicly scourged with rods, branded, and again expelled from the country." The death penalty was no longer prescribed, however, for a third offence as it had been in earlier similar decrees. The property of the exiles was to be confiscated.

At the same time it was decreed with equal strictness that no one "whoever he shall be, shall lodge or give shelter to native or foreign Anabaptists, whether they be related to him or not, or help to encourage their meetings and preaching whether by granting them the use of their barns or houses or by aiding them in any way or to have any intercourse with them whether written or oral; or in any way lend them aid in the form of money, provisions, or the like neither secretly or publicly." But on the other hand every one is ordered to report any known Mennonite to the magistrates. Failure to comply with this order on the part of non-Mennonites is punishable by a fine of a hundred guilders. This proclamation is to be read from all the pulpits in the State church.

Dutch Intercession

In the meantime, while this order for wholesale deportation was being put into execution, the Mennonites of Holland, having heard of these high handed measures against their Swiss brethren decided to intercede in their behalf. The Dutch Mennonites, un-

like the Swiss, had by this time reached a position of great influence and power in financial and political circles in their own country. Some of the most influential merchants of the time as well as leaders in the sciences and arts were of their faith. They could speak, consequently, with some degree of authority. Through their influence, the burgomasters of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, as well as the States General itself, wrote letters to both the Bernese and Zurich Councils, asking for milder treatment of the persecuted Mennonites, and especially that the latter might be permitted to leave the land in peace with all their possessions and families. The Mennonites in Holland, the States General said,

“are a highly respected and peaceful people, willing at all times to perform all their civil duties, and giving liberally to all worthy causes, even contributing to the benevolences of the Reformed Church itself.”

Influential Dutch Mennonites sent a special representative in 1660 to investigate conditions among the Swiss prisoners, and later to bring financial aid to those in need. But their representative, Adolf de Vreede by name, though not himself a Mennonite, found it difficult to gain access to the prisoners, while both the Bern and Zurich Councils forbade altogether the distribution of money. In fact some of the funds were later seized by the officials, and used to carry on the work of persecution. Even the Reformed church itself in Holland became interested in what they regarded as unnecessarily harsh measures adopted by their fellow believers in Switzerland. Professors in the Dutch Universities, under whom many of the Swiss professors and clergymen had studied, wrote to the latter advising more humane treatment of those whose

only sin was that they desired to worship God in their own way.

None of these intercessory efforts, however, were of much avail. The Swiss autocrats in Bern and Zurich had decided to rid themselves of Mennonitism once for all without any financial loss to themselves. So they turned a deaf ear to the advice of the States General and their own Reformed brethren, as well as to the pleas of the Dutch Mennonites. The decree of 1659 was carried out to the letter. Each year the most aggressive of the Mennonites, and especially their ministers were dispossessed of their property, torn from their families, and escorted across the border, threatened with worse treatment if they returned.

But the crucial year came in 1671, when some seven hundred men, women and children, mostly from Bern, but also the remnant from Zurich, the old and decrepit as well as the babes in arms, were driven out of their native land, penniless and helpless, about one hundred to Alsace, and the rest into the Palatinate, where fortunately just at this time they had been invited to settle by the Count Palatine, Karl Ludwig, who desired thrifty farmers to build up the deserted agricultural lands laid waste by the ravages of the Thirty Years' War. For many years, however, these remained in straitened circumstances here in spite of the help received from their Dutch brethren, and the welcome from the tolerant count.

From a series of letters written to Amsterdam from the Palatinate in 1671 by the Mennonites themselves, we catch a glimpse of the suffering and hardships which were theirs during these trying times. In a letter dated April 7 it is said of the Swiss,

"they are daily hunted with constables and as many as they can get taken as prisoners to the city of Bern so that

four weeks ago about forty, men and women, were in confinement there. They have also scourged some, and banished them from the country, one of whom arrived here. They also scourged a minister of the word, and then conducted him out of the country, into Burgundy, where, when they arrived there, they first branded him, and let him go among the Walloons. However, as he could talk with no one, he had to go about three days with his burnt body, before his wounds were dressed, and he obtained some refreshments, being in such a condition that when they undressed him for binding up his wounds, the matter ran down his back, as a brother who helped dress him told me himself."

In May it is reported —

"The magistrates at Bern caused six of the prisoners, among whom was a man with nine children to be fastened to a chain and sold for the Sea, to be used as galley slaves between Milan and Malta."

Causes of Persecution

It may perhaps not be amiss here to suggest a few reasons for this persecuting zeal throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the part of the Bernese and other Swiss cantonal authorities in the land of reputed civil and religious liberty long after milder measures had been adopted in less democratic countries. Nowhere else did Mennonites at this time suffer such indignities as in Switzerland. In Holland and Prussia they were enjoying a large degree of liberty. Even in the Palatinate during the eighteenth century, under intolerant Catholic counts, they enjoyed greater freedom, restricted though they were occasionally in their civil and religious privileges. The Church for a time joined the State in a combined effort to drive Mennonitism out of existence. Public debates were held with Mennonite leaders by the Reformed clergy throughout this period in an attempt to convince the former of the supposed errors of their way. Ques-

tions of theology, however, played a minor part in these debates; for both sides recognized that in fundamental theological doctrines they had much in common. Even Breitingen, the Reformed leader in Zurich in the early seventeenth century, suggested that they agreed on all points in which *die Seligkeit gelegen ist*.

The questions to which the clergymen always demanded an answer in either debate or trial were—Why did the Mennonites refuse to attend the state church, refuse to have their children baptized, insist on performing their own marriage ceremonies, and set up their own worship? In other words why did they not conform? The charge against them was that of separatism, always a serious charge under the State church system the world over in the days before state and church were separated. The Swiss church was not unique among the State ecclesiastical systems of the day in its attempt to stamp out non-conformity, and its measures to bring about that result perhaps not much more barbaric than those adopted by our own Puritan commonwealth during these identical years in hanging the Quakers.

One answer which the Mennonites usually gave to the first question disturbed both the clergy and state authorities not a little. The former refused to attend the established church, they said, because of the worldly life of the clergy, and the low moral standards of many of the members. Recognizing the charge as one of the potent causes of the continued existence of the Mennonite movement, as well as frequent dissatisfaction among the people at large, the state clergy held frequent synods to discuss means and proper remedies for raising the moral level of the whole ecclesiastical leadership. That Mennonites themselves lived on a high moral and spiritual plane is evidenced by the almost universal testimony

of even their most persistent enemies during all these centuries.

From a Reformed clergyman⁵ who wrote in 1693, we have this interesting description —

“they are reputed to be true Christians, but observe strictly those practises which are peculiar to the Anabaptists, and which distinguish them from us as follows—they do not attend our church because of the presence of so many sinners among us; do not observe the Lord’s Supper with us; they establish their own churches; they do not baptize their children; do not take an oath, nor go to law; they do not go to war; nor occupy positions of honor nor hold civil office; they wear simple clothes, do not wear a collar about the neck, nor adorn themselves with lace and ruffles or anything that might savor of pride or extravagance; they speak slowly, and sing in a low, soft voice, and constantly keep their eyes fixed on the ground; they have little to do with those of high station, and avoid the clergymen; they seldom visit the taverns, and do not attend baptismal or marriage feasts; they do not often attend markets, and do little trading and buying; they are willing to suffer persecution; they are industrious and appear among the people as living a simple, pure and honest life.”

The writer, after describing the virtues of the Mennonites, then goes on to advise his own people to follow the example of these pious folk. It should be remembered, too, that since the Mennonites were the only free church in the land—this was before the day of modern free churches on the continent, Baptist, Congregationalists, Methodists, etc.,—they drew down upon their heads the whole concentrated wrath of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, against any attempt at separatism. They alone stood for separation of church and state, and they were a very small body, but they taught a dangerous doctrine for the perpetuity of the state religious system.

It was not primarily to the Swiss church however,

⁵ George Thorman, pastor at Luetzelflueh.

but rather to the secular authorities to whom the Mennonites owed their bitter experiences. The causes of persecution, especially in the latter centuries, were political rather than religious, although pastor and magistrate were usually linked together in the mandates as proper persons with whom complaints against the Mennonites might be lodged, it was the state that took the initiative in all punitive measures.

The usual excuse given by the Bernese Council, when forced by outside public opinion to justify its harsh measures, was that Mennonites refused to take the oath of allegiance, and that they refused to perform military service. When confronted with the suggestion that Mennonites in other lands held similar beliefs without serious consequences, the Council replied that the Swiss cantons, unlike other countries, depended not on mercenary armies for defence but upon a national militia. In this military policy largely no doubt, is to be found the reason for the persistent hounding of the Mennonites in Switzerland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Refusal to Become Conscripts

Armies in Europe at this time were small, and composed of professional soldiers, who made soldiering a business, and fought for pay, plunder and excitement rather than for a worthy cause. It was not difficult usually to keep the thin army ranks filled; and conscription, consequently, was little known before the Napoleonic wars in France. It was not difficult, therefore, for such as had scruples against war to escape military service, sometimes at the expense of other service. Especially was this true under the autocracies of the time. Thus Mennonites in the eighteenth century enjoyed military exemption not only in Holland, but also in Prussia, the Palatinate, Austria, Bavaria, Russia and

in nearly every other land in which they were found except in Switzerland. It is only in democracies that special groups find it hard to secure unusual privileges. Democracies are inclined to show little patience with the conscientious scruples of minorities.

It must not be inferred, however, that the Swiss Mennonite policy had its roots in democratic institutions; for the Swiss cantons were democracies in name only. The number of ruling families represented in the oligarchic Councils of Bern were but few. It was not democracy, but the autocratic military system, as just indicated, that lay at the bottom of all these troubles for the Mennonites. To be perfectly honest, too, the apologists for the Swiss policy of oppression should not have justified the course of the state authorities on the plea that the Mennonites refused to defend the fatherland; for defence of the fatherland was not the use to which conscripted soldiers were usually put. They were used to fill the pockets of ruling noblemen, rather than for common defence. Throughout all the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Switzerland was a favorite recruiting ground for mercenary soldiers for all the wars of the time. They served on both sides in every conflict, and Swiss were pitted against Swiss on every battlefield of Europe. The army of Louis XIV in the War of the Palatinate contained thousands of Swiss soldiers, and it was largely to these Swiss troops that Louis owed his overwhelming victories in that campaign of devastation.

This vicious system of furnishing troops for pay to other rulers was an old practise in Switzerland, dating far back beyond the Reformation days, and extending up to the time of the French Revolution. It is needless to say that the system found much bitter opposition among all the common people, regardless of religious

beliefs, on economic and social grounds. Mennonites, however, opposed war because of a deep religious conviction. But since their example would encourage others to take a firmer stand against the practise, Mennonites must either give up their convictions or be driven out of the land. It is worthy of notice that persecution was most bitter during the period of European wars in the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, when profits for letting out mercenary soldiers were at the maximum.

Although Mennonites believed governments to be divinely ordained and as such to be accorded implicit obedience in all things except where religious convictions were concerned, yet their refusal to take an oath of any sort, including the oath of allegiance on account of religious scruples, was often misinterpreted by the governing authorities as an act of civil disobedience and of disloyalty. At the same time under the feudal system which still prevailed in Switzerland, the peasant class especially, was living under considerable economic and social oppression. The charges made by the Mennonites against the prevailing order on religious grounds often was not much different from those made by peasants at large on economic grounds. And so, the ruling authorities, ever fearful of losing their positions of power and influence, did not always stop to draw a fine distinction between the motives of the peaceloving, non-resistant Mennonites who refused to take the oath on religious grounds, and the leaders of peasant revolts whose refusal to perform the same act was a sign of armed rebellion against constituted authority. Mennonite persecution frequently followed in the wake of peasant uprisings. Mennonite ministers and rebel leaders were sometimes executed together. There is no doubt but that the peasants often sympathized with the Mennonites in the

attempts of the latter to establish their own form of worship. In 1714, several *Täufer Jäger* were set upon by a mob of some sixty peasants of Sumiswald, and severely beaten when they attempted to arrest a number of Mennonites for refusal to attend the state church.

An Unfortunate Division

Unfortunately the same strong spirit of individualism which inspired these men and women to face death rather than violate their religious convictions, also frequently led them to hair splitting arguments over unimportant questions of policy and practise. One such quarrel took place in Bern in 1693, soon after the exodus just mentioned, among those who remained. Most of the church quarrels in history can be traced to the peculiar notions of some strong-willed individual who can see but one side of a controversial question. And so it was here.

Jacob Amman was the name of a young minister whose exact local field of labor, whether in the Bernese *Oberland*, or Alsace, is not known definitely. A few years later his Swiss following came from the upland section of the canton of Bern, although Jacob himself was a resident of Alsace as early as 1696, if not earlier.⁶ He was a young man of decided opinions and evidently of an aggressive personality with conservative leanings. He conceived the notion that not all was well with the Mennonites of Switzerland, and proposed, according to one of the chroniclers of this controversy, to "restore the temple of God upon the old foundation." The main charge against the

⁶ Amman may have been one of the Swiss exiles to Alsace during the great migration of some twenty years earlier. The fact that the whole Alsatian church finally accepted his leadership, while his following in Switzerland was much smaller would suggest that his home at the time may have been Alsace.

church seemingly was laxness of discipline—and especially the failure to apply the *Meidung* to excommunicated members—a practise advocated in the conservative Dutch Confession of Dordrecht, adopted by the Alsatians in 1660, and no doubt well known also in Switzerland, but not followed in this and several other practises by the Swiss church of that day.

Meidung or Avoidance, it will be remembered was not a new doctrine—having been taught and practised by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, and certain sections of the Dutch church, with disastrous results. Jacob Amman now demanded its rigid observance also in the Swiss church, where evidently its use hitherto had been unknown. Together with several other ministers, whom he had seemingly converted to his point of view, he set out upon a tour, in 1693, through the various Swiss congregations in the interests of his new idea. The Alsatians as well as the congregations in the *Oberland*, seemingly went over to the new camp in a body; but with the *Emmentalers*, those who lived in the *Emmental*, in the general region of *Langnau*, Amman had little success. Losing patience with the ministers here, in the course of a visit among them, because they would not agree with him on this question, he placed them all under the ban. These in turn, under the leadership of one Hans Reist, returned the compliment and banned the Amman party, thus starting a division that has just recently been ended in Europe, but is still alive in America. The quarrel was carried into the Palatinate and elsewhere wherever Swiss emigrants went.

A lively correspondence was kept up between the leaders of the two factions for some years, which now furnishes us with our only source of information on the subject, and in which we find that numerous uncomplimentary adjectives and hard names were bandied back

and forth, especially by Amman which we may as well forget now; for that was not a day of "sweetness and light"; Luther did not use polite language either. A little later the *Ammansch* party also adopted footwashing as a church practise, although that was not at first an issue in dispute; and the observance of communion twice each year instead of once as had been the custom heretofore.

Amman likely also found fault with some of the new social customs and practises that threatened to creep into the church at this time, and against which he evidently thought the Reist party was not sufficiently on its guard; for in a letter written by himself there are hints of fancy clothes, shaving of the beard, wearing long hair, and attending funerals in the state church. Hooks and eyes were not an issue at the time, for both factions in Switzerland used this archaic means of holding their clothes together until well into the nineteenth century.

In fact the whole movement was one toward a strict observance of the older customs, or at least a crystallization of the customs and practises then current, a sort of Chinese worship of the past, and of suspicion of all innovations in the affairs of every day living as well as in forms of church worship; an ever present fear of the dangers of "worldliness." This spirit of conservatism did not grow mellow with age. The old was seldom discarded for the new in styles of dress as these changed during the centuries. And so hooks and eyes were retained instead of buttons; shoestrings instead of buckles; and belts instead of suspenders, long after these once common articles of wearing apparel had been discarded by the folks at large. Beards, too, and long hair once merely a common custom, acquired a religious significance, and became the object of constant solicitude on the part of the church fathers.

As already indicated nearly all the Mennonites in

Alsace and in France in course of time, as well as a small group in the Palatinate were of the Amish wing of the denomination. The Jura Oberland congregations emigrated to Holland in 1711, and others to Alsace and Neuenberg, so that few remained in Bern. All these congregations have since lost their old time character and are no longer to be distinguished from other Mennonites; but in America there are still a number of large settlements scattered throughout Pennsylvania and the states of the Mississippi valley where the ancient customs and practises prevailing in Switzerland in the days of Jacob Amman are observed to the letter.

Renewed Persecution

Unfortunately the exodus of 1671 did not end the story of persecution in Bern, though it had practically extirpated the Mennonite faith in Zurich and the other Swiss cantons. Not all of the Mennonites left the canton at that time. Some of those who did, later returned. The policy of annihilation continued. In 1688 the War Council suggested frequent military musters; that all men be required to wear swords when appearing in public places; and that oaths of allegiance be taken every six years. Mennonites by refusing to comply with these regulations could then be easily identified. In 1690, the Great Council ordered that all children of Mennonite parentage be disinherited if the latter did not conform to the state church. In 1695 the fundamental law was laid down that one's usual civil obligations could not be evaded because of religious views. By 1709 the prisons of Bern were again full.

In the meantime more efficient machinery was perfected for handling the whole Mennonite problem. A special commission called the *Täufer Kammer*, (Mennonite Commission) was organized to deal exclusively

with the whole question; *Täufer Jäger* (Mennonite Hunters) made up usually of the common rowdies of the community, were set to the task of spying out the suspects and haling them before the magistrates; the *Täufer Gut* (Mennonite Fund) made up from the confiscations of Mennonite property, and at first used to defray the expenses of the whole persecution process, but later turned over to the State church for school and church purposes, was placed into the custody of this commission. Every effort was put forth to attract the persecuting officials with alluring bribes to the unpopular business of rounding up harmless Mennonites. To the "Hunters" was awarded thirty kreutzer for every ordinary suspect placed under arrest. Ministers brought a higher price—one hundred reichsthaler.

But none of these drastic measures had thus far proven successful in stamping out the Mennonite movement. No matter with what harsh punishment the Mennonites were threatened, they repeatedly returned to be with their families or spend their last days on their native soil. It now occurred to the Commission to try a plan which had been under consideration for some time, that of disposing of the fifty-six prisoners, which included no doubt the most conscientious and thus most troublesome of the leaders, by deporting them to America or some other far off land from which return would be extremely unlikely. The time for this experiment seemed propitious. It was the year when all south Germany and Switzerland was aflame with the Pennsylvania fever. Some ten thousand Palatines had collected this year, 1709, in London, hoping to be transported at the Queen's expense to the "Paradise of America." Why not send these troublesome Mennonites along? So thought the Commission; and the Council agreed.

Arrangements were accordingly made with a certain

George Ritter, a sort of colonization agent then stationed at Bern, to take charge of the proposed expedition. For every Mennonite successfully landed across the Seas, Ritter was to receive the sum of forty-five reichsthaler. He started down the Rhine on March 18, 1710, with his Mennonite prisoners and a group of other unwelcome citizens whom he was to accompany to the Graffenried colony just being established in the Carolinas, at the request of the Bernese authorities.

An Emigration Project that Miscarried

In the meantime since the Rhine flows across numerous political boundaries on its way to the Sea, it was necessary for Ritter to secure a series of passports for his human cargo, usually not a difficult matter, and no trouble was anticipated here. But the Council of Bern had not sufficiently taken into account the political influence of the Dutch Mennonites at the Hague in their deportation schemes. These latter had never ceased to interest themselves in the fate of their Swiss brethren. A special relief commission had been formed to aid the Swiss with necessary funds to carry on their struggle for existence, and to intercede for them with the Swiss governments. When the Dutch heard that a group of Swiss Mennonites were being deported down the Rhine to a foreign land against their will, they immediately used their influence successfully with the States General to prevent the passage of the Ritter expedition through Dutch territory. St. Saphorin, the Swiss representative at the Hague, was assured by the President of the States General that Holland, being a free country, the Mennonites as soon as they reached Dutch soil would be at liberty to go where they pleased in spite of the fifteen guards which Ritter had with him. Evidently the representatives of other countries also interceded at the

Hague with the Swiss ambassador for milder treatment of the Mennonites; for the former, in a letter to his home government, said he would rather "contend against the representatives of all the combined powers except England, than against the Mennonites alone."

Lord Townsend, the English ambassador to Holland, whose interest St. Saphorin hoped to enlist, since the prisoners were destined for British territory, informed the Swiss representative that England wanted only voluntary immigrants, and not deported prisoners in her colonies. William Penn, who hoped that these refugees might settle on his own lands, and who had written Townsend to help Ritter to secure passage through Holland for "fifty or sixty Swissers called Mennonites coming from Holland in order to go for Penn Sylvania" evidently did not know that these "Swissers" were religious exiles being deported from their native land against their will.

St. Saphorin was convinced by this time that free passage to the mouth of the Rhine was impossible, and he so informed Ritter. But the latter was already on his way; nothing was left for the latter but to release his prisoners along the route. Twenty-eight had already been left at Mannheim because of sickness and infirmities. When those who remained on the boat asked permission at Nimwegen, near the Dutch border, to visit their brethren in this town, Ritter did not object. They never returned to the boat. And so ended another attempt of the Bernese government to solve this troublesome religious problem.

The failure of the Bernese to rid themselves of their Mennonite prisoners as they had planned, even though they had transported them temporarily across the border, did not lighten the burden of those Mennonites who remained. The harrying process continued, and soon another set of prisoners had been accumulated, some of

them undoubtedly returned exiles from the Ritter expedition. The Dutch Mennonites, in the meantime, continued their efforts to solve the problem and bring relief to their Swiss brethren. They even promised to furnish money with which to buy substitutes or make good any financial loss entailed by the refusal of the Swiss Mennonites to enter military service. But they were informed that substitutes would not be permitted where universal service was the rule. It finally became evident to all the parties concerned that there was only one permanent solution of the question—wholesale emigration of all the Mennonites, not only the prisoners, of their own accord, with their families and possessions, to a land of their own choosing. And to bring this about, the Dutch Relief Commission now worked with unflagging zeal urging both the Swiss Mennonites and the Bernese government to cooperate to this end.

This should not have been a difficult task; for the authorities were anxious to rid themselves of the Mennonites, and the latter were even more concerned about finding a place of refuge. But it proved more difficult than at first it seemed.

First of all, the Bern Council wanted to be assured that none of the Mennonites, if transported elsewhere, would ever return to Swiss soil. But while they were anxious to get rid of troublesome non-conformists, they did not wish to part with the Reformed wives and husbands and children, of whom there were a number even in Mennonite circles.⁷ Military efficiency, and economic well-being in those days of wars, pestilences, and famines

⁷ Among the three hundred odd exiles who started down the Rhine in 1711, there were twenty-one of the Reformed faith, fourteen of whom were Reformed husbands of Mennonite wives, and several Reformed wives of Mennonite husbands who evidently preferred to follow their erring companions into exile rather than enjoy the special privileges of their own church.

depended upon maintaining a growing population. There was no over-population problem at that time. Most of the countries of middle Europe discouraged emigration with heavy emigration taxes, and some of them threatened with heavy punishment any colonization agent who tried to lure citizens from their native land. There is on record at least one case of a Swiss *Neulander*, the name in Switzerland for colonization agent, who was put to death as late as the eighteenth century for his activities in this direction. Non-Mennonite members of the family of a Mennonite exile consequently were not permitted to accompany the latter. Property, too, being confiscated, the exiles were sent out into the world empty handed.

In this latter fact is to be found a partial explanation at least for the repeated return of Mennonite exiles to their native land even in the face of threats of dire consequences,—the desire to see their families and possess their property. Then, too, not to be overlooked is the missionary zeal which dominates the life of every deeply religious people. Switzerland was the land of Mennonite origins; and many were concerned that the faith should not die out here. Benedict Brechbuhl, a leading minister among the Swiss, in exile at the time in the Palatinate, was sorry to learn in a letter from one of his brethren that

“die Bruderschaft in der Schweiz es niet fuer gut halten das Ich das Haerdli Christi nicht haelfe zu bauen, und ver-meinen Ich soellte das voelckli niet verlassen.”

Then, too, the uncertainty of their destination made the Mennonites slow to consent to any plan of emigration. Finally, however, by 1711, the Dutch had worked out a satisfactory agreement with the government at Bern for the withdrawal of the whole Mennonite population. The prisoners were to be set free; the emigrants

could settle wherever they pleased except in the neighboring canton of Neuenberg, at that time under Prussian rule; to sell their property and take the proceeds with them, as well as the non-Mennonite members of their families without paying the usual emigration tax, the one condition being that all Mennonites must promise never to return. Religious meetings in the meantime were to be prohibited. The Dutch Mennonites were to assume the responsibility of seeing that these provisions were fulfilled. Johan Runkel, the Dutch ambassador at Bern was commissioned with the task of carrying out the whole program.

It seems strange that a people so despised as were the Mennonites in Switzerland should at the same time be so welcomed by nearly all the other nations of middle Europe.⁸ When it became known that some five hundred peace loving religious refugees were about to be driven from their native Swiss homes because of their religious beliefs, half a score of nations vied with each other in an effort to secure them for their own sparsely populated lands. Both the Prince of Nassau and the Count of Neuwied wanted skilled workmen and expert craftsmen to settle in their towns; but since the Swiss were nearly all small farmers and dairymen, they could not qualify. The king of Denmark was interested in having them settle

8 The reason for this is to be found, of course, in their skill as farmers and their ability to bring returns from thin soil which others less industrious often found so barren that they could not even scratch out a bare existence from it. The secret of their success is perhaps best expressed in the language of one of the Swiss emigrants of 1711 who, in speaking of this fact says,

"While it may be true that the natives have many advantages over us, yet we also have certain advantages over them in this that we do not, like many of the natives, spend our substance on excessive eating and drinking, or extravagant dress, or useless tobacco smoking."—Ernst Mueller—*Geschichte der bernischen Täufer*, p. 327.

on his lands. The Palatinate, too, was open. The Queen of England had a special representative in Switzerland advertising the attractions of the Crown colonies for prospective settlers; but America seemingly received slight consideration from the main body of Swiss Mennonites at this time. Ambassador Runckel, who threw himself wholeheartedly into the task of rescuing the unfortunate Mennonites from their dilemma had a suggestion of his own. Why could not the Bernese government grant religious toleration to the Mennonites on condition that they settle as a body on the waste swamp lands in the northern part of the canton? This proposal however, received serious consideration from no one except Runckel himself. Even if Bern had agreed, which was extremely doubtful, the cost to the Mennonites of reclaiming these swamps, according to Benedict Brechbuhl would have been prohibitive.

More plausible seemed the proposition that came from the king of Prussia, Frederick William I. This thrifty king who took a keen interest in the whole emigration project from the first, wrote repeatedly to his ambassador at the Hague, urging that the Mennonites settle anywhere in his lands where he promised substantial advantages "far beyond anything they could hope to gain from Holland." Especially did the king urge them to locate in East Prussia not far from where thriving Dutch Mennonite colonies had existed for over a century, and where a recent pestilence killed off many of the inhabitants, leaving lands, houses, stock and equipment all of which the Mennonites might have almost for the asking. Benedict Brechbuhl headed a special commission which investigated the lands in question, and had an interview with the king's representative at Potsdam. Although Brechbuhl himself was enthusiastic about the project, few of the Swiss took advantage of this generous offer,

fearing, so they said, the possibility of another plague; and displeased, too, with the institution of serfdom which still prevailed here. It was finally decided by those in charge of the emigration project to lead the expedition to Holland, and leave the matter of final destination to later consideration. A little later, however, a small group, with the help of the Hamburg and Danzig Mennonites, located in East Prussia; but these, after some years of heavy taxation, and because later Prussian kings sometimes forgot their earlier promises of military exemption, were again forced to leave their new home.

Exiled

Preparations for the voyage down the Rhine, under the direction of ambassador Runckel, were pushed vigorously during the early months of the year of 1711. Five boats were constructed at Basel to carry the party down the river. After much effort on the part of Runckel and the Dutch committee at Amsterdam, it seemed for a time that the whole scheme would fail because of the opposition of the Swiss Mennonites themselves. The final success must be attributed almost entirely to the infinite patience and the unwearying endeavors of the Dutch ambassador. There were several reasons for the reluctance of the Swiss Mennonites to give the project their whole-hearted support. First, in view of an experience of over a century and a half of persecution suffered under the rule of the Bernese government they were suspicious of promises made by the latter for the future. Some hesitated to sign the agreement never to return to Switzerland; for in spite of the agreement made between the Dutch ambassador and the government of Bern, there were still several uncertainties in the way;—the status of the non-Mennonite members of the families who preferred to remain behind, as well as of the children; the

property rights of each in case of divided families; and the question as to whether the general amnesty promised also applied to all the ministers, some of whom were already in exile.

Especially disappointing to Runckel was the feeling of bitterness still existing between the Amish and Reist parties. The Amish in the Oberland seemed willing enough to emigrate and cooperate to that end, but the Reist faction in the Emmental refused to comply with the demands of the Dutch ambassador until compelled to do so, after repeated delays. The fact that the latter contained most of the prisoners whose status was less certain than that of the others may account partly for this reluctance; but the religious bitterness still existing between the two parties which had mutually banned each other, to which the Amish also added avoidance, made a whole-hearted cooperation in any common enterprise extremely distasteful. But Runckel displayed infinite tact and patience, and finally rounded up most of them.

The expedition, under the leadership of the same Ritter who had led the fifty-six prisoners of the year before, left Basel on July 13. Of the five hundred whom it was supposed would constitute the cargo, less than four hundred reported, and one of the five boats which had been constructed was left at Basel. Even the most courageous of them left their cruel but yet beloved native land with many a heartache. The following description of the departure of the flotilla of exiles, by the well known historian of the Bernese Mennonites, Ernst Mueller, though drawn more heavily from the writer's imagination than from any authentic document, yet may not be far from a true account, as they drifted down the Rhine and their homes disappeared behind the Cathedral spires of Basel, and the wooded hills of the Jura.

"Seated upon the chests and bundles which were piled up in the middle of the vessels were the grey-headed men and women, old and weak. On the sides were the young people watching with delight and wonder the shifting scenery of the banks as they glided by. Now hopeful, now troubled, they cast questioning glances to the north, and then with longing eyes they again turned their faces to the south in the direction of their beloved homes which they were leaving forever, the homes which had so basely exiled them, and yet the homes whose green hills and silver tipped mountains they could not forget. And when overcome with sorrow, someone began a song which comforted them."

*O Herr, wir thun dich bitten
Richt unser Herz und Gemueth
Nach deinem heiligen Wort
Durch deine grosze Guet.*

*Zuend du in unsern Herzen
Eine reine Liebe an
Thu fuer uns wachen und streiten
Sonst moegen wir nit bestahn.*

Most of the Reist party deserted as they had opportunity in the early stages of the voyage down the Rhine to seek their friends and brethren in the Palatinate. And so it was mainly the Amish party, about three hundred and forty in number, that finally arrived at Amsterdam on August 3, where they were cordially received by their Dutch brethren, and all their wants provided for until they could find a permanent location.

The Dutch Mennonites were most generous in their support of these Swiss exiles with their strange customs and foreign dialect. First, the new-comers were distributed temporarily among the congregations at Deventer, Harlingen and Groningen, and substantial sums of money were collected to help them get a new start in life on small farms. A small group of the Reist followers, who seemingly had accompanied the party unwillingly all the way to Holland, after a temporary stay

at Deventer later found their way back again to the Palatinate. But the major part of the expedition, the Amish group, were gathered together in the course of a few years and located near Groningen and Kampen, where they organized several separate congregations. Within ten years these had become self supporting, and no longer needed the help of their generous Dutch brethren.

For nearly two hundred years these congregations kept up their independent existence; although in a Dutch geographical environment, they had more ecclesiastical affiliation with their Swiss and Palatinate Amish brethren than with the native Dutch Mennonites. For many years they kept up their Swiss-Amish forms—the Swiss dialect, hooks and eyes, long hair, beards, broad brimmed hats, footwashing, two witnesses to every sermon, kneeling in prayer, singing from the *Ausbund*, and other old customs and practises still in vogue to the letter in isolated communities in Pennsylvania and Kansas among the Simon pure American Old Order Amish. At first the native Dutch found these strange people with their foreign customs of great interest. Their curiosity, it is said, was so great sometimes that local police occasionally found it necessary to keep the crowds away from the doors of their meeting places during the hours of worship.

We know very little of the later history of these congregations except a few facts gleaned from a letter written in 1765 by Hans Naffziger, an Amish bishop from the Palatinate, who had visited them in that year. By that time these Dutch Swiss Amish evidently had fallen into evil ways religiously. Naffziger reports to his home congregation in the Palatinate that the Dutch churches had developed a division in their ranks some years before, no doubt the result of an attempt to maintain their old time Swiss customs in a progressive Dutch environ-

ment, and that for six years now there had been no baptisms, no communion, and no marriage ceremonies in the church; many young people had forsaken the faith; they lacked competent preachers, and it was impossible to persuade young men to accept ministerial responsibilities. For a time there was a division into the New and the Old Swiss. Later visits from the Palatinate evidently revived the old church. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century however, that the Amish here gave up their separate existence, and merged into the general Dutch Mennonite body. No one now would suspect their Swiss Amish origin except for their Swiss names. One would have little difficulty in recognizing *Leutcher* as Swiss *Latschar*; *Ricken* as *Rich*; *Root* as *Ruth*; *Leendertz* for *Leenders*; *Lutwyler* for *Litweiler*; and *Gauwetzy* for *Gautschy*, all familiar Amish names still found in Woodford County, Illinois, and Fulton County, Ohio.

But strange to say the end of this weary story of persecution was not even yet. Some of the Swiss exiles returned, as already noticed; others never left. These now again became the objects of a most bitter attack on the part of the Bernese Council. All the old mandates were vigorously enforced. There were still about one hundred families left who refused either to conform or be driven out. Upon these now the Bernese government turned with renewed bitterness. All Mennonites were again ordered to be cast into prison. Rewards were offered for their arrest, fifteen crowns for a woman, thirty for a man, and one hundred for a minister. Secret meetings were prohibited, and no one was permitted to give Mennonites any assistance. One man was fined a large sum for shielding his own wife. Reformed parents must disinherit Mennonite children. The installation of a minister was punishable with a heavy fine. Returned exiles

were threatened with a galley sentence. In 1715 and again in 1718, several men were condemned to that fate, though due to popular protests from the Dutch States General and local popular opinion, the sentence was never carried out. At one time there were over forty Mennonites in prison. In 1742 even an Amishman from Holland, visiting his relatives in Bern, was cast into prison for a time. In 1734 the *Täufer* Council appointed several special agents to scour the community for Mennonites. But it is not necessary to continue this tale of woe. The story of the early eighteenth century does not differ much from that of the seventeenth. It was not until the close of the century, when the liberalizing influences of the French Revolution permeated all Europe that democratic Switzerland reached the state of religious toleration attained by the Dutch two hundred years earlier.

Toleration Finally Granted

In 1799 the Helvetian Republic passed an act of toleration granting religious liberty to every faith, and permitting those who had been banished for the sake of their religious beliefs to return. But even this act of toleration, while it ended active persecution, yet did not place the Mennonites on an equal footing with the State church. Baptism and marriage were still regarded as civil and religious rites to be administered only by the State church. In 1810 the Emmental congregation requested that their own baptismal and marriage ceremonies be recognized as valid and final. But the authorities refused the request, and the next year all Mennonite children who had remained unbaptized since 1798, twenty-seven in all, were ordered to submit to the rite at the hands of the State church. The Mennonites could then rebaptize again if they so desired, the authorities

declared, and they might repeat the marriage ceremonies according to their own customs. The spirit of the times was growing too liberal, however, for enforcing such regulations. When the Mennonites refused to bring their children to the Reformed churches for baptism, they were led unwillingly to the baptismal font by the local police. Even the state clergy, recognizing this procedure as a travesty upon religion, objected to its continuation.

Finally in 1815, after a long and bitter struggle of nearly three hundred years, the Mennonites in the canton of Bern were granted complete religious toleration with full rights of citizenship. Instead of the oath a hand-clasp was permitted. In lieu of military service they were granted the right of furnishing money for a substitute.

Just about the time the Swiss Mennonites were granted full religious toleration many of them decided to emigrate of their own free choice to that land of opportunity to which their forbears had refused to be deported one hundred years earlier. Most of these came from the Jura settlements, but some also from the Ementhal.

The Jura Settlement

The Jura spoken of here consists of that part of the canton of Bern on the French side of the Jura hills, which up to 1815 had composed the Bishopric of Basel, but since then incorporated into the canton of Bern. Along these hills, often in out of the way places, and on hitherto unproductive mountain sides, Mennonite exiles, at first from Alsace, but later largely from Bern, had been invited all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to settle as tenants on the estates of wealthy noblemen, where because of their economic worth they were offered protection against religious persecution by

the ruling bishops. Here by hard work and plain living they eked out a comfortable existence, and greatly increased the income to their landlords from their meager lands.

It was perhaps only natural that their more shiftless French neighbors should envy these German speaking, industrious Mennonite farmers their greater prosperity, and seemingly better reputation among the noblemen of the community. Frequent complaints were lodged against them with the ruling authorities, and demands that they be driven from their holdings. It is interesting to note that these charges were always economic, not religious or political. In 1731 the French peasants in one local Mennonite community complained that the Mennonites monopolized all the work of the community, and by using up the wood in the local forests for their cheese making, greatly raised the cost of living for all. Later it was charged that by taking care of their own poor and orphans, and settling their own disputes among themselves without going to law, and helping one another in time of need they separated themselves from the rest of society and thus formed a dangerous self-governing local unit—a state within a state.

Usually these complaints fell on deaf ears. Well satisfied landlords and thrifty bishops were seldom willing to exchange industrious and successful German Mennonite farmers and dairymen, for lazy Frenchmen, though Catholic. With a few exceptions the Mennonites of the Jura enjoyed comparative religious toleration, under the rule of the bishops of Basel, although all through the centuries individuals and small groups migrated to America and into France mainly for economic reasons.⁹ By 1798 it was estimated by a local traveller

⁹ An example of such a migration is found in the arrival at the port of Philadelphia on the ship *Brothers*, on September 30, 1754, of a group of twenty-seven Mennonites, mostly from

through the bishopric that the Mennonites numbered about eight hundred souls in this region, centered largely about two large congregations—*Sonnenberg* and *Münsterberg*. It was from this region that most of the Swiss emigrants to America came in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The American Emigration

This emigration movement during the first half of the past century not only of Swiss, but also of Alsatian and south German Mennonites, was the result of several causes. Most important perhaps was the spirit of militarism which prevailed throughout this part of Europe during the Napoleonic wars, and the feeling of unrest, which the Mennonites feared would break out in further conflict, ultimately making it impossible for them to maintain their non-resistant principles. In some cases equally strong were the economic motives. The Jura Swiss especially, were decidedly poor by this time. Not being permitted to buy land of their own, they were merely tenants on long term leases. Some did not even own a horse, being compelled to do all their labor by hand, assisted occasionally by the family cow. A goodly number were forced to practice some sort of avocation with their farming, such as weaving, shoemaking, or cabinet making, in order to eke out an existence. Families were large, and the small farms could not take care of the increased population. Just at this time, 1815-1820, times were especially hard. As a result of the war, prices were high. Rents were increasing. Black bread and potatoes was the only food for many. Meat could be afforded only on special occasions. Even butter and eggs were scarce.

the bailiwicks of Erguel and Moutier in the Jura. For a list of these emigrants and their economic condition see Smith—*Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania in the Eighteenth Century*, page 215.

But now a few crop failures had reduced some of the poorer people to actual want. One of the early immigrants to America, somewhat of a rhymster describes the situation at the time in a bit of verse

*“Hier in dem Schwiezerland,
Wie Allen ist bekannt,
Hoert man viel Klagen;
Weil so viel arme Luet,
Die z’keine Zeute nuet
Heu z’ saeme tragen.”*

These were the conditions that made the Swiss at this time turn their eyes to America—still the land of milk and honey.

The Swiss pioneer who led this movement was one Benedict Schrag, who in 1817 settled in Wayne County, Ohio. He was followed before 1860 by many from both the Jura and the Emmenthal, who located in large colonies in Wayne, Putnam and Allen counties, Ohio, and in Adams county, Indiana.

Neu Täufer

It was during the time of this emigration, too, that another church quarrel arose resulting in the creation of a new sect locally known as *Neu-Täufer*. This sect was organized by a Samuel Froelich, between 1832 and 1835, in Aargau and in the Emmental. Froelich had been a theological student in the Reformed church, but being cast out of that body for some reason in 1832, he decided to organize a church of his own. It was while he was engaged in this enterprise that he visited among the Mennonites in the Emmental. His visit here was well timed for his purposes, for here, too, a quarrel was brewing under the leadership of two influential members of the congregation—Samuel Gerber and Christian Baumgartner. Gerber especially, who had just recently been

installed as minister in the Emmental congregation by the elders of the Jura church, was ambitious to play an important role in his circle. Accusing his fellow ministers of a lack of religious zeal and of the want of all spiritual life, he introduced a series of changes in the church under his charge quite contrary to the practises then in vogue. Thus the soil was well prepared for the work of proselyting. Froelich, in bad repute among the clergy of the State church, was soon forced to leave his work in the Emmental due to pressure from the local police officials, but he sent a representative who was not slow to take advantage of the local quarrel, and added quite a number of the disaffected to the new following. Gerber and Baumgartner and their disciples, who had already introduced the practise of weekly communion services in their group, were somewhat reluctant at first to fellowship whole-heartedly with the Froelichites, because the latter insisted as a test of membership that all new members must submit to a rebaptism by immersion, since every other faith but theirs was a dead faith, and could not be recognized. No former baptisms consequently could be considered as valid. This was rather humiliating to men who had all along assumed a superior piety among their fellows; but they finally swallowed their pride, and in the course of a few months the new sect won over some sixty members from the Emmental congregation, as well as about an equal number from the state church.

“Neu-Täufer” of course is a name first applied to the followers of Froelich by his opponents. These former now soon developed an air of superior sanctity, and a spirit of exclusiveness that set them apart from all other religious denominations. All others belonged to the “world” with whom there could be no religious fellowship whatever, and not too much of social, especially with

former fellow believers. Salvation was possible only by way of the new road. "Salute no man by the Way" was applied literally to those not of their own faith, and especially to those from whom they had withdrawn. They bitterly denounced the old church and ridiculed the preachers as "Babblers, preachers of a dead faith," etc.; and the members of these churches were all "spiritually dead." At first meetings were held every night after supposedly apostolic example. Communion was administered every Sabbath morning, while religious services were held in the afternoon. To the government they owed no allegiance except to pay their taxes. They considered it wrong to hold civil office. This was evidently the contribution of the Mennonite contingent to the new body.

Apostles of the new sect carried the division to America among their relatives and friends here. In 1846 several came to Ohio, where they established a small group of "New Täufer" among the Mennonites of Wayne county; and later they appeared among the Amish in New York and Illinois, where they became locally known as "New Amish."

Results of Persecution

The long years of persecution which the Swiss Mennonites suffered not only left their deep impress upon their souls and minds by engendering within them a spirit of submissive self depreciation from which they never fully recovered, but also greatly reduced their numbers. As a result of exile, emigration, defection, and withdrawal back into the state church, they have hardly held their own, and are making but slight gains even now. The descendants of the seven or eight hundred exiles who crossed into the Palatinate between 1671 and 1711, only a part of whom later came to Pennsylvania, now

number over one hundred thousand, while the descendants of those who remained in Switzerland and were saved for the Mennonite faith count up hardly more than fifteen hundred. Most of these are still found in the Jura region, with the largest congregation at Sonnenberg. The Emmental congregation numbers about three hundred members, with Langnau as its center. There are a few small settlements in Basel and Neuchatel.

At the time of the American emigration in the nineteenth century they had no meeting houses, services being held in the barns which were usually under the same roof as the houses, or in the open air in the summer season. Singing was *einstimmig*, and the Ausbund with its long hymns of thirty and forty stanzas still the accepted song book. Conservative customs and old styles of dress were still in vogue. Men wore short coats, knee breeches, hooks and eyes, and long beards, but none on the upper lip, because the mustache on the continent had a military significance. The women vied with the men in the simplicity of their clothes. Adornments of all sorts were forbidden. All worldly vanities were discouraged, even looking glasses being tabooed. But according to one writer of the time the fair young mountain maidens lost none of their charm by substituting for prohibited silk ribbons and flowers and feathers, ingeniously woven straw figures in their straw hats which they set jauntily upon their heads.

The same writer, a well known German author of the period, after a visit through the Swiss Mennonite communities, pays these people a high tribute. He speaks of them as

“a sturdy, strong race, true-hearted, peace-loving, conscientious and benevolent, beloved by all their neighbors, Catholics and Protestants alike. They live a life of such patriarchal simplicity that one cannot help loving them. Among them are found no drunkards, no gamblers, no loafers, no

liars, no jealous neighbors. If perchance strife should arise among them, it is amicably settled by their elder. They help one another in busy seasons usually without pay. Their temperate, moderate habits assure them good health and long lives. Their conduct seems to be prompted by the one thought—"Keep God continually before your eyes".

Culture and Religion Today

Many of these customs of a century ago have since been discarded. But in fundamentals the Swiss are still among the most conservative of the European Mennonites. They still lead rather a secluded life engaged in small farming and dairying. Emmental cheese is famous the world over. The Emmental settlement in recent years has perhaps been slightly less closed to outside influences than those in the Jura region. The exodus of 1711, and the persecutions which followed during the rest of the century nearly annihilated the Mennonite congregations here. For more than a hundred years after this they were without an elder of their own, the few scattered settlements being served in this capacity by the elders from the Jura. During the nineteenth century they were again revived, even receiving recruits from the Reformed church. Their present meeting house, arranged as a combination church building and parsonage, was erected in 1887. Up to that time all the Mennonite meetings in Switzerland were held at private homes alternately in various sections of the settlements. Walking was the chief means of travel, and for that reason the owner of the home where the meeting was held served dinner to the worshippers from a distance on that particular Sunday. The Emmental congregation now also holds its communion services once each month, and permits immersion to such applicants for baptism as desire it. With their Reformed neighbors they are now on good terms, and are especially friendly to the Evangelicals by

whom they have been somewhat influenced in late years in their religious practises and beliefs.

The Jura congregations being of Bernese extraction have clung tenaciously through all these centuries to their German language, although entirely in a French environment. They have maintained their own German schools, at their own expense in addition to the French schools maintained by public taxation. During the late war there was more or less of friction over this language and school question, although Switzerland herself was not directly engaged in the war. The congregations now also have their own church houses although only in quite recent years.

The Swiss Mennonites are still semi-nonresistant, and are permitted by the government to do noncombatant military service. They wear the uniform when in training, and a small sword as a sign of their profession, but do not carry a gun. While the church is still inclined officially to uphold this pseudo-nonresistant position permitted by the government, yet the young men in their training, influenced by the growing militarism of the day, are going over more and more into full service.

Of organized institutional life there is very little among the Swiss Mennonites. They have no special schools for training their ministers, though some of the younger members are taking advantage of the Chrishona Missionary and Bible Training School near Basel, and annual Bible Institutes are now becoming popular in the different congregations during the winter months. Ministers are still selected by lot, with little preparation required for their calling. Although they have no mission posts of their own on the foreign field they have supported quite liberally in the past the mission work of both the American and Dutch churches, and have furnished some workers for these fields. The churches

meet annually in a separate conference, and are in close touch with the work of neighboring churches in south Germany and Alsace-Lorraine. Their church paper, the *Zions Pilger*, was founded in 1882 by two young men, Samuel Baehler and Johan Kipfer. It was a small four-page weekly and in recent years did not seem to have much of Mennonite moulding influence. It has since lost such distinctive denominational character as it once possessed by merging with an Evangelical publication; and is now published at Langnau as the *Freie Zeuge*. The Swiss Mennonites were not a literary folk and wrote but few books. But their famous old hymn book the *Ausbund* usually published at Zurich or Basel, the last time in 1839, went through many editions; and the well known old *Froschauer* Bible published at Zurich contemporaneously with Luther's own, was for centuries known as the *Täufer* Bible, and a forbidden book for all the Swiss Mennonites during the years of persecution. The most recent history of the Swiss Mennonites, *Die Taufgesinnte-Gemeinden*, by Samuel Geiser, a Mennonite preacher of the Jura, was published in 1931. Numerically, economically and intellectually the Swiss who emigrated to America, either to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, or to Ohio and Indiana in the nineteenth surpass those who remained in the home land.

Influential among the Swiss Mennonites during the past century was Ulrich Steiner, affectionately referred to in approved Swiss fashion as *Steiner Uli*. He was born in 1806 at Trachselwald, and in 1830 was elected in the Emmental congregation by lot. Five years later he was ordained as an elder. For many years he served as the spiritual adviser of the scattered members of his flock, travelling extensively, or rather continually, in the interests of the church. His work was especially arduous during the "Neu Täufer" controversy. He is the author

of a small booklet, at one time frequently seen on the scanty book shelves of the American Swiss Mennonites, *Angenehme Stunden in Zion*. He died in 1877.

An influential leader among the Jura Mennonites during the latter half of the eighteenth century was a former minister whose surname is no longer known; but who was usually spoken of among his neighbors, though perhaps not among his own people, as *Täufer Baenz*.¹⁰ He was a Bernese exile driven to the Jura hills soon after the middle of the century. Property-less and without the means of support, he first settled with his family on a rented piece of ground so barren that no one expected him to extract a living from it; but which, through hard work and the self sacrificing efforts of the whole family, he transformed, in the course of time, into a prosperous estate that became the envy of farmers far and wide.

Täufer-Baenz was not only a good farmer, however, but also an inspirational religious leader among his people as well. He travelled unceasingly over the Jura hills, visiting the various scattered Mennonite congregations, serving their spiritual needs, preaching, it is said, as long as three or four hours at a time, the most eloquent and self-sacrificial of all the Jura preachers. He was regarded as a man of considerable learning, unusually well versed in the Bible, though likely not theologically trained. He was long remembered for his eloquence, philanthropy and worldly prosperity. Täufer-Baenz has almost become a legend today among the Jura Mennonites.¹¹

Ancestral Home of Swiss Americans

As already suggested, Switzerland was the native land, either directly or indirectly, of nearly all the Men-

¹⁰ Mennonite Bennie.

¹¹ See *Jugendwarte*, October, 1923, p. 141.

nonites in America east of the Mississippi river,—the Palatines in Pennsylvania, the Amish of Illinois and Ohio, as well as the Swiss who came directly to Ohio and Indiana, in the early nineteenth century. The following family names wherever found today in America in Amish and Mennonite communities are all of Swiss origin, mainly from Bern and Zurich though other cantons are also represented. In the following list no attempt is made at a consistent or correct Swiss spelling. The earlier Pennsylvania names of course appear considerably Anglicized as do also many of the Amish in Illinois. The later immigrants to Ohio and Indiana from Switzerland direct are more likely to retain their original form. Where different spellings occur, such as Guth, Gut, or Good for instance, only one form is given although all may occur sometimes even in the same family.

The list, which by no means pretends to be complete, follows—Allebach, Althaus, Amstutz, Augsburg, Ackerman, Bachman, Brubaker, Bertsche, Bowman, Bomberger, Baer, Brenneman, Bixel, Bechler, Bechtel, Baumgartner, Basinger, Burckey, Brand, Becker, Biery, Beidler, Bookwalter, Blosser, Boshart, Burghalter, Bucher, Brackbill, Badertscher, Dirstein, Detweiler, Diller, Eby, Ebersole, Eiman, Ellenberger, Egly, Engel, Eschbach, Eicher, Eschleman, Funk, Fahrney, Frick, Flickinger, Frey, Fellman, Gehman, Gerber, Gunther, Gnaegi, Guth, Graber, Geiger, Guengrich, Gunday, Geisinger, Gochnauer, Goering, Hess, Horning, Haldeman, Hiestand, Habegger, Huber, Hostetler, Hartman, Hodel, Hauri, Herr, Hauter, Hirschler, Hilty, Hirschy, Hunsinger, Imhoff, Ioder, Ingold, Kendig, Krehbiel, Kennel, Kaufman, Kreider, Kratz, Krup, Landis, Longenecker, Luginbill, Locher, Leatherman, Lehman, Littwiller, Lichty, Meili, Metzler, Maurer, Moser, Mosiman, Musselman, Newcomer, Neuenschwander, Nisley, Nussbaum, Neuhauser, Neff, Oberholtzer,

Oeberli, Oesch, Plank, Risser, Rich, Reist, Reber, Rohrer, Roetlisberger, Richenbach, Rupp, Ruth, Roth, Roeschli, Ramseir, Schlegel, Shenk, Strickler, Schope, Schrag, Schneck, Steiner, Stutzman, Sprunger, Shallenberger, Steinman, Stucki, Sommer, Stalter, Schertz, Schantz, Schlatter, Stoll, Sweitzer, Suter, Stauffer, Schmutz, Snavely, Streit, Slabach, Showalter, Smucker, Shoenauer, Troyer, Thierstein, Thut, Ummel, Verkler, Welty, Wenger, Wisler, Witmer, Wuetrich, Yordy, Zuercher, Zeist, Zook, etc.

IV

THE NETHERLANDS

At the time of Menno Simon's death the Anabaptists, or Mennonites, were still the largest evangelical party in many sections of the Netherlands, although it was not long until they were greatly outnumbered by the Calvinists, who have ever since played a dominant role in the religious affairs of the little Dutch kingdom. They were found chiefly in the northern coast provinces—Flanders, Zeeland, Holland, upper and lower, Friesland and Groningen; but small groups were also scattered throughout the interior regions. During the entire sixteenth century too, they were subjected to the most bitter persecution by both Charles, and his son Philip. It is doubtful whether any other people in Europe suffered from the ravages of religious intolerance and political oppression as did the inhabitants of the Lowlands under the sway of these two bigoted Catholic rulers; and unquestionably no other groups in all Europe can claim as many martyrs to the cause of religious freedom as do the Mennonites. Although relatively a small group, as compared with the larger Reformation parties, yet between 1531, the date of the execution of the first Anabaptist martyr in the Netherlands, to the close of the century, more Mennonites were put to death for the sake of their religious convictions in the Netherlands alone than were sent to a martyr's grave from all the religious parties in England during the same period, not excluding the reign of Bloody Mary herself. The various bloody decrees issued by Charles were confirmed and renewed

by a general edict proclaimed by Philip in 1556, in which he forbade all laymen to discuss or teach publicly the Holy Scriptures, on penalty of death; the men to be executed with the sword, and the women be buried alive; but in case of persistence in their errors, the execution was to be by fire; and under any conditions the property of the accused was to be confiscated. Anabaptism especially was to be ruthlessly destroyed.

As a result of persistent persecution throughout the century many of the Mennonite refugees found their way to other more tolerant lands. In Flanders, where Catholicism finally prevailed, and where the inquisition consequently worked most perfectly, Mennonitism was practically rooted out by 1600. Many of the refugees fled to the northern provinces where opposition to Spanish rule was more determined among the people in general. But from all the provinces there was a continual stream of Mennonite refugees to neighboring countries—England, East Friesland; and also to Poland, and East Prussia, where along the Vistula delta, a number of flourishing congregations were built in the course of time. This wholesale murder of innocent men and women, who asked for nothing more than the right to worship God as their consciences directed, did not cease until finally William of Orange conquered the Dutch provinces one after another, and in 1578 established a limited degree of religious toleration. The last of the Mennonite martyrs to suffer the death penalty in the north, so far as the records of van Braght reveal, was executed in Leeuwarden in 1574; while the last recorded victim in the south was a woman, who was buried alive in Brussels, in 1597.

As to the number of men and women who were put to death during this century for their religious faith, it is difficult to estimate. The number, fifty thousand or

more, occasionally quoted in the popular histories of the period, is no doubt greatly exaggerated. Counting, of course, all those who fell in battle during the prolonged political struggle throughout the century, in the war of independence, as well as those who died as a result of those wars, and also the political executions, the total number might well run into the thousands and perhaps tens of thousands; but the purely religious executions made up but a mere fraction of this entire number. Perhaps about half of van Braght's list of fifteen hundred Anabaptist martyrs were from the Dutch provinces, Flanders alone furnished nearly four hundred. Brandt, the Dutch historian, lists five hundred and ninety-three. A recent student of the subject is authority for the statement that about two thousand Protestants were executed for their religious beliefs in the Netherlands during the century; and of these he thinks about three-fourths were Mennonites. This is a larger Mennonite contingent than that given by van Braght; but it is not likely, of course, that the well known martyrologist was able to gather a complete list of all those who suffered the death penalty. It is interesting to note that the ratio of women to the entire number of executions among the Mennonites was much higher than among other groups. Of the former, more than thirty percent were of the so-called weaker sex, as compared with some six percent for the latter.

The Blood of the Martyrs

Our best source of information of the suffering of this period is to be found in van Braght's book of martyrs, compiled in 1660, from various court, and other records. From this book we learn that the methods of execution were as cruel as fanatical ingenuity could devise. Burning at the stake, sometimes under a slow fire, was a com-

mon practise; frequently a bag of powder tied about the neck or placed within the hat of the victim hastened his death. Women were often tied up in bags and thrown into the water to drown; occasionally they were buried alive. Men and women were stretched on the rack until their bones cracked and blood gushed forth; they had their tongues and limbs pierced with screws or pinched in vices for the purpose of forcing a recantation, or perhaps a betrayal of the hiding places of their fellows. But seldom even under the greatest pain and agony, could they be induced to implicate their co-believers. A few examples from this book of horrors will be sufficient to show the spirit of the age.

In 1539, Tjaart Reynerts, of Harlingen, in Friesland, was mercilessly tortured on the wheel because, out of compassion, and brotherly love, he had at one time harbored Menno Simons in his house during a time of the latter's distress. In 1545, a certain Francis of Bolsward, in the same province, having been charged with despising the mass, and refusing to swear and to observe the eucharist according to the Roman fashion, was burned to ashes. At the time of the execution, the attendant having stripped the victim of his clothes, and having fastened him to the stake, was about to strangle him with a rope, when the rope broke, allowing Francis to fall to the ground. The frightened executioner then hastily tried to burn his victim with peat and wood, but under the nervous strain made such a bungling job of it that he aroused the anger of the bystanders.

Executions were especially numerous and unusually diabolical during the bloody rule of Duke Alva. In 1571, Anneken Heyndricks of Amsterdam was burned at the stake for having "forsaken the mother, the holy church, and having adopted the cursed doctrines of the Menonists." When she attempted to speak to the bystanders at the

time of her burning, the executioner filled her mouth with gunpowder, and then pitched her into the fire. This done, the bailiff was seen to laugh, as though, so says the chronicler, "he had done God an acceptable service."

Testifying before sympathizing bystanders at the funeral pyre was especially unacceptable to the authorities, who had these executions in charge, and were not permitted if it could be prevented. In 1574, some thirty men and women in Antwerp were burned around one fire, and in order to prevent them from testifying to their faith the executioners^a

"filled the mouths of the pious witnesses of God with gags and balls, so that they were not able to proclaim to the bystanders their innocence, and the reason why they suffered thus. But the priests and the monks, having noticed that these pious men of God when they came to the place of execution, freed themselves from these gags and balls, and spoke to the people from the word of God, the monks in order to prevent this had instruments made resembling vises between which they made the prisoners stick their tongues, which, when they had screwed fast, and the tip thereof touched with a red hot iron, that they should swell up and thus not slip back. And this new and abominable invention of the monks, these tyrants to their perpetual shame used on the persons mentioned above."

The Catholic church usually tried to secure a recantation from the victims before execution, sometimes promising them their freedom, and at other times a lighter sentence in case the person doomed to death would renounce his faith. To this end priests were often sent to the cells of those in prison for the purpose of convincing them of the errors of their ways; or if that would not succeed, to terrify them into a recantation. How well

^a Dr. W. J. Kuehler of the Mennonite Seminary at Amsterdam, claims that van Braght is not altogether a reliable authority of martyrology. In this case Kuehler maintains that only three martyrs met their death in Antwerp in 1574.

they succeeded is typified in the following case where a certain friar, Cornelis, attempts the conversion of a man by the name of Jacob de Roore, a prisoner in Bruges, condemned to death in 1569. The following dialogue is recorded by van Braght.

FRIAR CORNELIS: Well, I've come here to see whether I can convert you (Jacob, I believe is your name) from your false and evil belief, in which you are erring, and whether I can not bring you back to the Catholic faith of your mother, the Roman church, from which you have apostatized to this damnable Anabaptism. What do you say to this, eh?

JACOB: With your permission, as regards that I have an evil false belief, this I deny: but that through the grace of God I have apostatized your Babylonian mother, the Roman church to the members of the true church of Christ, this I confess; and thank God for it who said: Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues. Rev. 18:4; Is. 52:11.

FR. CORNELIS: Is it true, and do you call our mother, the holy Roman church, the whore of Babylon? and do you call your hellish, devilish sect of Anabaptists the members of the true church of Christ? Eh, hear this fine fellow. Who the devil has taught you this? Your accursed Menno Simons I suppose

JACOB: With your permission, you talk very wickedly. It was not necessary for Menno Simons to teach us something new, that the Babylonian whore signifies your mother, the Roman Catholic church, since John teaches us enough concerning this in his Apocalypse of Revelation, in the 14th, 16th and 17th and 18th chapters.

Like all Anabaptists, Jacob was well versed in the Scriptures, answering all the friar's arguments with copious Bible quotations. The friar in turn relied entirely upon a citation of authority and tradition, and upon abuse. Of Scripture he knew very little. Ridiculing Jacob's profession, that of a poor weaver and candler, he was surprised nevertheless, at the latter's thorough

knowledge of the Bible. Referring to this characteristic of the Anabaptists, he bursts out, after Jacob informs him that God often conceals His truth from the wise, and reveals it to babes;—

FR. CORNELIS: Exactly, God has revealed it to the weavers at the loom, to the cobblers on their bench, and to the bellows menders, lantern tinkers, scissors grinders, broom makers, thatchers and all sorts of riff-raff, and poor filthy and lousy beggars. And to us ecclesiastics who have studied from our youth day and night, He has concealed it. Just see how we are tormented. You Anabaptists certainly are fine fellows to understand the holy Scriptures; for before you are baptized you can't tell A from B, but as soon as you are baptized you read and write. If the devil and his mother have not a hand in this, I do not understand anything about you people.¹

Then follows a long discussion on various points of doctrine during which the friar often loses his temper and resorts to invective and abuse. In accusing Jacob of performing the episcopal functions of baptizing and teaching without proper confirmation, the friar asks him what he thinks of confirmation.

JACOB: I know nothing to say of episcopal authority, or of confirmation. How then should I administer it, or what should I think of it; for confirmation is a bugbear of which I know nothing.

FR. CORNELIS: Is it possible, do you Anabaptists call the sacrament of confirmation a bugbear? Ah accursed heretic, the devil take you into hell fire to burn you forever, see.

JACOB: Do not get so angry and excited, for I call it a strange bugbear,² because it is unknown to me. But tell

1 Mennonites ranked far above the average in literacy. Their dependence upon the Bible for their religious faith, rather than reliance on some priest made ability to read a necessary prerequisite.

2 "Bugbear" hardly seems the right word here. This English translation of the *Martyrs' Mirror*, which is not altogether satisfactory, is the Elkhart edition of 1886. The term Ana-

me, what it is, and what you hold concerning it; then I can better tell you what I think of it.

FR. CORNELIS: Bah, this blockhead presumes to be a bishop of the Anabaptists, and does not yet know what the sacrament of confirmation is. If you are a bishop you ought to confirm yourself. My lords, see here, what a fine bishop the Anabaptists have had out there in the Gruthuysbosch, who preached so many sermons there. Is it not a fine bishop, teacher and preacher? But see, with what we have been vexed and tormented.

JACOB: I am no bishop, nor do I consider myself a teacher; but I have sometimes led the brethren and sisters, converts of our church, with exhortation from the word of God or the Holy Scripture according to my small ability.

After several hours spent in a vain attempt to turn the poor weaver from his faith, the friar finally gives it up in despair with this parting message,—

FR. CORNELIS: Well, I have no desire to dispute with you any longer. I shall go my way, and let the executioner dispute with you with a burning fagot . . . and afterward the devil in hell with burning pitch, brimstone and tar, see.

JACOB: No; for Paul writes "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."

FR. CORNELIS: Bah, in hell. Expect nothing else than to go through this temporal fire into the eternal; hell yawns and gaps for your soul, you accursed, damned Anabaptist that you are.

The last Mennonite to suffer the death penalty in the Netherlands, according to van Braght, was a young wo-

baptist as used in this dialogue is the Dutch word *Doopsgezinde* which is used in the Netherlands interchangeably with Mennonite. This supposed interview does not have the earmarks of a genuine incident. Van Braght is supposed to have copied it from a well known book of sermons of that day. But whatever the source or however questionable the details may be, the story illustrates no doubt fairly well the religious spirit of the time.

man by the name of Anneken van den Hove, who was buried alive near Brussels in 1597. After two years of imprisonment, during which every temptation had been offered her to recant without result, however, the court finally decided to send her to her death, in this case to be buried alive. After digging a pit into which she was cast, her executioners

“continued to throw dirt and thick sods of heath ground upon her body, up to her throat; but notwithstanding all their asking, threatening or promising to release her and take her out of the pit if she would recant, it was all in vain and she would not hearken to it. Hence they threw much additional earth and sod upon her face and whole body, and stamped with their feet upon it that she should die the sooner. This was the end of this pious heroine of Jesus Christ.”

INTERNAL DIVISIONS

It would seem that the common hardships which the Dutch Mennonites had to endure throughout the sixteenth century would have united them into a solid and cohesive body of believers which only the most divergent differences in religious practise and faith could have separated. But such was not the case. Even in periods of the most bitter persecution they found time to argue over insignificant details of religious beliefs and human conduct, which today would seem but mere trifles—sometimes hardly more than the cut of a coat, or the ceremonial manner of washing feet.

For this there are various explanations. First of all, Mennonites took their religion seriously. They were extreme individualists. Members of the state churches could shift the responsibility for their religious decisions upon the shoulders of the priest or magistrate, or perhaps upon the theological doctor. Not so the Mennonites.

They were their own priests, and must answer to God directly for all their spiritual shortcomings. Their church government was strictly congregational, each congregation being an independent ecclesiastical unit, with no organic connection with others except in an advisory capacity. There was no hierarchy with power to impose uniformity of doctrine or practise upon the whole body.

Mennonites, furthermore, stressed strongly right living as a corollary to right thinking. In the state church where everybody was practically born into membership, whether willing or not, not much stress could be placed on right conduct as a condition of continued membership. But to the Mennonites, the church must be a "pure church, without spot or wrinkle," and could be kept pure only by a rigid denial of spiritual fellowship to such members as refused to conform to the standards of faith and practise set up by the group. This strict disciplinary use of the ban was one of the early sources of contention among the Dutch Mennonites, as we have already seen, in the days of Menno himself. Regional and linguistic differences, too, became a source of division among the brethren. It is interesting to note that most of the early factions separated more because of differences on rules of human conduct, rather than upon points of theological opinion. Mennonites freely banned members for intemperance in drinking, extravagance in dress, the least evidence of dishonesty in business dealings, and the slightest infraction of the moral code.

Flemish

Space does not permit here more than a mere mention of the various divisions that took place within the Mennonite body during this time. Soon after Menno's death one of the first distinct parties to be formed was that of the Flemish. This Flemish group consisted, as

already noticed, of refugees who, because of the serious religious persecution in their own province of Flanders, had sought refuge in Friesland during the middle of the sixteenth century. They differed in some respects from the Frisians among whom they settled, slightly in racial traits, in language, and religious customs and practises. Having had little contact with Menno Simons and with Dirk Philips, they were less rigid in the use of the ban than were their northern brethren; and were less subject to the arbitrary control of their church elders in their religious life. In Friesland, the elders exercised considerable autocratic power, selecting the ministers, and holding the right to baptize within their own hands; while the Flemish were more democratic in their practise, any preacher being allowed to baptize, and ministers being elected by the entire congregation. Because of their closer contact with the French, and their occupation as weavers, the Flemish wore finer clothes than did their Frisian brethren; although it is said that the latter were more particular and scrupulous in their household arrangements. Because of these various differences, and perhaps several others, these refugees were regarded with a certain degree of suspicion by the Frisians at the time of their migration. Not being able to affiliate with the native church, the Flemish formed congregations of their own.

Frisians

The natives of Friesland came to be known in church literature as Frisian Mennonites. After a number of vain attempts at reconciliation during the century, the Flemish and Frisians remained separate branches in many Mennonite communities for nearly two full centuries. The former especially were determined to maintain their separate identity, freely banning the latter, re-

baptizing such as wished to transfer their membership to their body; and excommunicated such as intermarried with any other branch.

Waterlanders

The most influential and most tolerant of these different Mennonite parties, though perhaps at no time the most numerous, was the group popularly known as the Waterlanders, so named quite early in their history after the region in which they became most common, the low-land coast along the Zuider Zee north of Amsterdam. These Waterlanders it will be remembered were opposed to the strict application of the rigid disciplinary rules adopted at Wismar in 1554 respecting the ban, and avoidance, in the case of husband and wife. They also disagreed with Menno's views on the incarnation.

At first this group was quite orthodox on the fundamentals of the Mennonite faith and practise. Its first confession of faith, published in 1577, which also happened to be the first Dutch Mennonite confession to be drawn up by any party, stressed all the traditional Mennonite doctrines, including the conservative practise of foot-washing. The later Hans de Ries confession, however, published in 1610, omits the article on this practise, and specifically rejects the application of avoidance to conjugal relations. On non-resistance, the oath, outside marriage, the magistracy, as well as all the traditional theological doctrines regarding Christ, his person and purpose, the confession remains true to the general Mennonite views.

While the Waterlanders remained quite orthodox theologically during all this period, yet they very soon assumed a more tolerant attitude than the other groups toward the non-Mennonite world on such questions as outside marriage (*buitentrou*), admission of members

from other branches of the church without rebaptism, participation in civil government, and in their general business associations. They were among the first also to adapt their church practises to the growing demands of the times, audible prayer, educated and salaried preachers and similar necessary changes.

The contention of certain recent Dutch Mennonite historians that the Waterlanders had always been *vrijzinnig* (theologically liberal), and that their confessions of faith merely represented the opinions of certain individuals and were not to be regarded as binding upon the membership perhaps needs some clarification. That they were more individualistic than most others, and less inclined to blindly follow their elected church authorities may well be granted; but the very fact that these confessions were published and rather widely circulated among them would seem to be evidence that they represented certain standards of faith and practise upon which the brotherhood at large was fairly well agreed, and which might well be regarded as tests of fitness for church membership. Otherwise there would be little need for the ban. The Waterlanders, though more tolerant than the other parties were not religious anarchists.

An outstanding leader of this group was Hans deRies, co-author with Lubbert Gerrits of the above mentioned confession of faith, composer of a well known hymn book of that day, and compiler of a book of martyr stories which later developed into van Braght's famous *Martyr's Mirror*. DeRies was born of Catholic parents in Antwerp in 1553. Early in life he joined the Reformed church, but later was converted to the Waterlanders by whom he was soon elected to the ministry. Under suspicion by the authorities for his religious views, he was subjected to considerable persecution. He served a number of congregations including Amsterdam, Emden,

and for forty years at Alkmaar. He took an active part in the fight against the Socinian movement in his day, and was a strong supporter of all attempts to bring about greater religious cooperation of the various Mennonite groups. He died in 1638.

Upper Germans

Occupying somewhat of a middle position between the Waterlanders and the Frisians and Flemish were the Upper Germans, consisting of some Dutch congregations but more of their neighboring German brethren, who were inclined to follow the advice of the Strasburg meeting of 1555 regarding the ban and avoidance, which was carried to Menno and the followers of his strict rules by Zylis and Lemke in 1556.

These were the four main Mennonite divisions in the Netherlands during the sixteenth century. But among both the Flemish and the Frisians there were divisions within divisions. Each developed left and right wings. Thus the former party sprouted an "Old Flemish" offshoot, and this offshoot was later subdivided into a "Groninger" Old Flemish and a "Danzig" Old Flemish wing. The Frisians in turn expanded into a "Hard" and a "Loose" or "Young" Frisian party. Most of these divisions were based on disciplinary rather than on theological considerations.

Originally the terms Frisian and Flemish denoted racial as well as religious differences, but in course of time as all these groups spread themselves throughout the country these biological designations lost their significance. Thus the Old Flemish were not Flemish at all racially, but mostly Frisians and north Hollanders.

All these factions spread throughout the churches of the Netherlands; and in every community there were likely to be two or more Mennonite congregations side

by side, but having no religious fellowship with one another. The Flemish were found for the most part in Groningen, South Holland and East Friesland; the Frisians in the northern provinces; the Waterlanders as just indicated, also in the north. All the factions, Frisian and Flemish especially, were transplanted by Dutch immigrants to daughter colonies around the Baltic, into Poland, and East Prussia in the sixteenth century; and later by way of Russia even to the prairies of Kansas and Manitoba. While these factional names had almost entirely disappeared in the Netherlands by the beginning of the nineteenth century they continued longer in the daughter colonies.

Jan Jacobs-folk

With these early divisions of the sixteenth century should be mentioned also several small groups that originated in the seventeenth. One of these was known as the Jan Jacobs-folk, and had its source in the Frisian church in Harlingen. There had been a discussion for some time among the Frisian churches in general as to whether or not the ban should be strictly applied against those married outside of the church; and whether candidates for membership from the Flemish party should be admitted without re-baptism. It was just at this time, in 1599, that Jan Jacobs, an elder in the Frisian congregation, announced to his people that after consulting some of the ministers in his congregation, he had decided to insist upon the following rules among his brethren—no member would be permitted to sell any produce to a non-Mennonite husband of an excommunicated Mennonite woman if the woman herself could make use of the produce; but he might sell to the husband for his own direct use, or what could be used by neither; a Mennonite woman married to an unbelieving husband

must prevent her children from being baptized into the state church; no Mennonite would be permitted to take passage or send freight on a vessel in which as much as one thirty-second part of the vessel was owned by an excommunicated former member, or in which any of the crew were such.

Jan Jacobs actually gained a small following for these stringent views, and established several congregations in various parts of the Netherlands, mostly in Friesland. Jan himself, getting into trouble with the Frisian government because of his strict rules was banished from the province for a time; but wherever he went, he preached his peculiar doctrines, and gained a few followers. The last Jan Jacobs-folk congregation amalgamated with another Mennonite congregation on the island of Ameland in 1855.

Uko Wallists

The Uko Wallists were the successors of the Jan Lucas folk, the followers of one Jan Luyes or Lucas, a conservative elder in the Flemish congregation in Groningen, who by keeping his followers out of a union of the Flemish with the local Frisian group in 1628, developed a small sect known afterward by his own name. This small group was later absorbed by the followers of Uko Wallis, a disciple of Jan Luyes. Uko formulated some additional peculiar views of his own for which he was exiled from Groningen in 1637. Among other strange notions of his was the peculiar outlawed belief that Judas Iscariot committed no sin in betraying his Master, and that he still had a good chance of eternal salvation in spite of his act. Uko was an immersionist, and believed in the strict interpretation of Menno's theory of the incarnation, and strict application of the ban, especially against those guilty of *buitentrou*. He also ad-

vocated the practise of "footwashing" which was beginning to be discarded by the more liberal congregations. Scattered bands of Uko Wallists were to be found in Groningen, Friesland and in Danzig for many years.

While these various factions, together with numerous others not mentioned here, continued their separate existence more or less until well toward the close of the eighteenth century, yet in the main, by that time the Mennonites in general might well be grouped together under two heads—the conservatives and liberals, or Fine and Coarse as they were sometimes called. The more conservative included all those who held tenaciously to the old traditions—the rigorous use of the ban, marital avoidance, opposition to *buitentrou*, Menno's view of the incarnation, rebaptism of candidates for membership coming from other groups, lay preaching, footwashing, silent prayer, preaching from manuscript, simple clothes, non-conformity to the world in general, and all the other ancient practises without the slightest alteration. Because they had departed so slightly from the ways of Menno these regarded themselves the real Mennonites, while the more liberal elements were inclined to call themselves by the more general term *Doopsgezinde*.

It may be well to remember of course that the Mennonites of Holland were not alone in their strict regulation of the every day affairs of life, and in their disapproval of extravagant dress and luxuriant living. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries practically all of the dissenting religious bodies—Puritans, Quakers, Separatists, Baptists and later on the Methodists, as well as the Mennonites wasted much of their spiritual energy in trying to force their more worldly minded brethren to conform to the prescribed modes of conduct and dress regulations. The first dissension in the Leyden community of Separatists, it will be remembered, was caused

by the lace on Mrs. Frances Johnson's bonnet, which furnished a subject of controversy for a number of years. Bradford, the historian and governor of Plymouth colony, said that the church members were so strict that some of them were offended at the whale bone in the dress or sleeve, or the starch in a collar.

The Byntges Controversy

This strict insistence upon maintaining rigid standards of moral integrity and honest business practises sometimes led the Mennonites into serious controversies over non-essential details as the following instance will show. In 1588, an elder by the name of Byntges in the Flemish church at Franeker purchased a house from a neighbor for a given sum, but permitted the seller to write into the deed, for purposes of his own, a sum higher than the purchase price, the purchaser himself receiving no benefit from the transaction. This matter was finally brought to the notice of the other ministers of the church, who were inclined to regard the affair as of rather doubtful honesty. Byntges denied any attempt at willful wrongdoing, stating that the difference between the two prices was covered by other valuable considerations. But the dispute could not be settled so easily. As appeals were sent to outside elders to help settle the local differences, the quarrel spread beyond the confines of the local congregation, gathering new issues no doubt as it grew, until what began as a local disagreement, ended in a division that extended throughout the entire Dutch Flemish church. The Byntges party came to be known sometimes as the party of the *Housebuyers*, while their opponents in return were designated as *Contra-housebuyers*. The "Housebuyers," because they also happened to be the more conservative of the two groups, also came to be known a little later as the "Old Flemish"; the

others, after the housebuying episode had been forgotten, merely as the "Flemish." Strict business honesty is unquestionably a virtue to be highly commended, but it is doubtful whether the vindication of the principle of super-honesty shown here was worth the price paid.

It may be well to remind the reader at this point that the unduly large amount of space devoted here to these numerous small and insignificant divisions as compared with the main groups is not meant to be indicative of their numerical strength or their religious significance, but rather an illustration of the length to which Mennonite individualism may go when directed by unbalanced leadership.

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE ROLE OF OPPRESSOR

It must not be forgotten that the toleration granted by William of Orange at the time of his conquest of the northern provinces, was limited in scope. Religious toleration was still a relative term. State churches, whether Protestant or Catholic, still claimed exclusive possession of the souls of men. Complete soul liberty was not yet dreamed of by any one in authority. For another two centuries, almost, Mennonites were still compelled to pay taxes for the support of a state church which they did not attend; to have their marriages confirmed by that church; to build their meeting houses on an inconspicuous back alley, without tower or bell; and to suffer humiliating restrictions of various sorts in the free exercise of their religious practises and civil privileges.

As already noted, Mennonitism was completely choked out of Flanders at an early date. But in the northern provinces, which eventually won their independence from Spanish tyranny, the Reformed church fell heir to all the property, as well as the ecclesiastical

privileges of the former Catholic establishment. The new church was no less inclined to play the role of oppressor of non-conformists than its predecessor. In every province of the new state repeated attempts were made by the ecclesiastical authorities for some time to completely suppress the Mennonite faith, though no longer to be sure by fire and sword. Persuasion and coercion were both tried.

Upon the insistence of the Reformed clergy, a public debate was held, in 1578, at Emden between the Reformed leaders and the Mennonites, representing the brotherhood in eastern Netherlands and East Friesland, largely in the hope, no doubt, on the part of the Reformed that by exposing the views of the Mennonites on such controversial questions as the oath, incarnation, use of the ban, baptism, freedom of the will, the magistracy, and war resistance public opinion might be sufficiently aroused against them to justify governmental intervention. In 1596, a similar public discussion was held at Leeuwarden for a similar purpose. This latter debate lasted several months, and ran through one hundred and fifty sessions. Peter von Koeln was one of the Mennonite speakers in both of the above debates. Neither side was convinced of its errors in either of these discussions; but the Reformed clergy, having the sympathy of the ruling authorities, were declared the victors, and did succeed in obtaining a government order temporarily forbidding Mennonite worship in Friesland, and a money fine for several Mennonite preachers for refusing to comply with the order; as well as the banishment, some time later, of one of the conservative leaders, Jan Jacobs, of Harlingen, already mentioned. For a time, too, Mennonites were denied the right to conduct business enterprises in Leeuwarden. In Groningen preaching was prohibited, and it was decreed by the authorities that unbaptized

children could not inherit property. In the city of Sneek the right of worship was denied as late as 1628. In one of their synods the Reformed Clergy asked permission from the government to attend Mennonite meetings for the purpose of turning their misguided brethren from the errors of their ways, a request that was granted, to the great annoyance of those thus visited.

In 1604, at another synod, requests were made to prevent the ordination of young preachers; later efforts would deny ministers the right of travelling from one congregation to another, and to baptize and preach. As late as 1664, at another synod, it was suggested that the erection of new meeting houses be forbidden. And so, throughout the entire century and beyond, synod after synod passed drastic recommendations in an attempt to completely suppress the Mennonite faith. Although they were occasionally able to influence governmental action, yet generally the Mennonites had such a good reputation for industry and integrity that the governments, both provincial and national, paid slight heed to these unreasonable demands of the state church.

States General Favorable to Mennonites

With the States General especially, and the heads of the national government, the Mennonites had a good reputation, partly, among other reasons because of their liberal contributions in times of stress and especially in times of war, to local and national governments; for, although they claimed to be non-resistant, and opposed to war service in any form, yet they seemingly did not see the inconsistency between refusal to carry arms themselves and furnishing money for others to do so. In all the wars of the period Mennonites made substantial money contributions to the war chests. So thoroughly had the Dutch Mennonites won the confidence of king

William, of England, when he was still the Dutch Stadholder, that when in 1694, in the Barony of Rheydt, on the Dutch border, a group of Mennonites had been driven out of their homes by the local baron, the English king wrote the Count of the Palatinate, in whose jurisdiction the barony was located, interceding in behalf of the exiles. Again during the period of Swiss persecution in the early part of the eighteenth century, not only the States General, but also the burgomaster of Amsterdam, with both of whom the Dutch Mennonites had great influence, interceded with the Bernese authorities in behalf of the persecuted Mennonites, in which they spoke of the Dutch Mennonites in terms of the highest praise.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ONE OF CONSTRUCTIVE GROWTH

The separatist tendencies mentioned above during the sixteenth century were followed in the early part of the next by numerous attempts not only to combine individual congregations of like faith and practise into more effective working organizations, but also to bring together such of the factions as had most in common. As early as 1566 the native churches of four towns in Friesland—Harlingen, Franeker, Leeuwarden and Dokkum, organized a league^{2a} against foreign Mennonite influence, thereby starting the division into the Frisian and Flemish branches already described.

Among a number of other early unification movements among various groups might be mentioned that of a number of congregations in western Friesland which in 1639, united on a basis of a series of practical rules of

2a This league of course was not a binding union, but merely a cooperative attempt to promote certain common objectives. A union something like the modern Dutch Mennonite "Ring" The Dutch Mennonites never gave up their independent congregational form of church government.

living that are worthy of a brief mention here. In case of a second marriage, it is suggested in these rules, that the inherited property interests of the children of the first marriage be carefully defined, so as to avoid later disagreements; young people are advised to maintain high standards in their social relations, and to seek the advice of parents before entering the married state; elaborate and expensive weddings are to be discouraged, after the example of Tobias, of Apocrypha fame; merchants, in their business dealings, are to avoid the usual visits to the taverns, thus escaping the danger of the intemperate use of strong drink; the use of tobacco, also, which is described as an unclean and expensive habit, is forbidden; as is part ownership of a merchant vessel which carries guns for protection; plainness of dress and the strictest simplicity in the decoration of both ships and houses is prescribed. These regulations were read annually for nearly one hundred years before the congregations comprising this particular group.

In 1647, forty Waterlander congregations met to discuss their common problems; and thirty-two Flemish and Upper German churches did the same in 1649. Throughout the next hundred years and more, the unionization and amalgamation process continued. By 1800 there was little left of the old factionalism, in spite of several new divisions, except the terminology, and a few independent, isolated congregations that had somehow not kept pace with the spirit of the times. The organization, in 1811, of the *Algemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit* completed the unification movement which by that time had already made substantial headway.

Early Confessions of Faith

It was these first attempts to find a common basis of union that called forth the first confessions of faith,

nearly all of which fall well within the first quarter of the seventeenth century. One of the earliest, the Concept of Cologne, drawn up in 1591, represented the Frisians, Flemish and Upper Germans along the lower Rhine; the Hans de Ries confession, written as early as 1610, became the recognized statement of faith of the Waterlanders, and was presented to the small band of the English Gainsboro exiles under John Smythe in Amsterdam as representing the Mennonite doctrines. The Olive Branch, drawn up in 1627, as its name suggests, was definitely devoted to the cause of union, that of the Flemish and Frisians. One of the best known, and later one of the most widely adopted of all the confessions, was that of Dordrecht of 1632, originally drafted by representations of the Flemish branch of the church, but later adopted by other groups, including the Upper Germans, and Alsatian Mennonites; and today still the best known statement of faith among the more conservative branches of the church in America, though long ago cast aside with all other confessions by the Mennonites in the land of its origin. This statement of Mennonite doctrine reflects the views of the conservatives on such questions as foot-washing, shunning, and outside marriage; though on the doctrine of the incarnation it does not accept Menno's unusual theory, being satisfied with the declaration "which the faithful evangelists have given and left their description thereof."

It has already been intimated that the Dutch Mennonites differed less among themselves in their religious doctrines than in the application of those doctrines. It seemed easier for them to think together than to live together. Their theology was never philosophical, but decidedly Biblical. Leaders of Mennonite thought never concerned themselves much with the fine spun theories and philosophical distinctions which puzzled the heads

of the theologians of the day; but they expressed themselves in speech and writing on all questions of church doctrine in terms of Biblical phraseology, and let it go at that; it was not only much easier, but safer. Their statements, well buttressed with Scriptural references were inclined toward a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Socinian Influences

Among the charges made by the Reformed clergy against the Mennonites during this period, the first half of the seventeenth century, was the close affiliation between the more liberal minded groups of the latter with certain unorthodox religious movements that swept through the Netherlands at this time—Socinianism and Arminianism.

Socinianism was an anti-Calvinist, anti-pedobaptist, antitrinitarian religious philosophy that had its origin in Poland during the latter part of the sixteenth century, and had found its way into the Netherlands during the first half of the seventeenth. It was composed of a rather strange admixture of liberal theological speculations and orthodox religious views. The heart of Socinianism was its rejection of the doctrine of the trinity, though rather strangely, it retained a belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures, miracles, and many other orthodox doctrines. Jesus, according to this view, was a mere human being, though miraculously born, leading a perfect and holy life on earth, and risen from the dead. He did not atone for the sins of men, though through his teaching, and his perfect example, and by showing men a better way, he became after a fashion the Savior of men, worthy of the highest adoration and worship. The sacraments were mere ceremonies, valuable in their influence but not necessary to salvation. Socinians were advocates of religious toleration, and, like the Mennonites, were op-

posed to the oath and war; and claimed to work for the restoration of the beliefs and practises of primitive Christianity.

Because of some of these latter views the Socinians had much in common with the Mennonites, and certain groups of the latter were greatly influenced by their contacts with the former. While Hans de Ries, it will be remembered, led a campaign against the movement, some of the Flemish, on the other hand, were in close accord with it. For a full century Mennonites were accused frequently by the established church authorities of Socinian leanings; and this suspicion was a leading cause of persecution. A conspicuous example of this is that of Johan Stinstra, to be described later in this chapter.

Arminianism

Arminianism, of native origin, later usually spoken of as the movement of the *Remonstrants*, was a protest against the extreme hyper-Calvinism of the Dutch state church. Like the Puritans in England, and the Huguenots of France, the Dutch Remonstrants became involved in the political struggles of the country, allying themselves with the Republican party. Thus they were bitterly opposed by both the established church and the monarchical party so long as that party was in power. For a time they were forbidden to practise their religion, and their leaders were exiled. But with the death of Maurice of Nassua, in 1625, they were again granted toleration.

There was much in the religious philosophy of the Remonstrants that appealed to the Mennonites, especially their common belief in the freedom of the will, and opposition to the idea of predestination. For a time the attraction seemed mutual. In the beginning, before the Remonstrants had clearly formulated their religious views, some of them were inclined to accept the Hans

de Ries confession as a satisfactory statement of their religious faith. The Mennonites, in turn, frequently worshipped with the Remonstrants; prospective ministers occasionally attended the Remonstrant seminary at Amsterdam; and the two sometimes exchanged ministers. During the early part of the following century one wing of the Mennonite church was called the Remonstrant Mennonites.

And so it was to be expected that the Mennonites would share with both the Socinians and the Remonstrants much of the opposition and persecution at times directed by both the state and the established church against these proscribed religious faiths.

Collegiants

There was another contemporary religious movement in the Netherlands, that of the *Collegiants*, which exerted considerable influence upon the spiritual life of certain of the Dutch Mennonites. This movement, which drew rather heavily upon both Socinian and Remonstrant sources for its religious practises, was not an attempt to form a new religious party, but had as its aim rather the spiritualizing of those already existing; and represented in a way a protest against the dogmatism of both the Calvinists and the Remonstrants. There were no doctrinal tests for membership in the group. Anyone spiritually minded and baptized as an adult was welcomed to their meetings where he might prophesy and exercise his spiritual gifts to his heart's content. These meetings, called *Collegia*, gave the movement its name. Because the town of Rhynsburg, near Leyden, finally became the chief headquarters of the Collegiants they were sometimes called *Rhynsburgers*.

These Rhynsburgers were quite liberal in their religious thinking; they accepted no creeds; and, like the

Quakers after them, minimized the value of religious sacraments and ceremonies with the exception of baptism, which was by immersion. Like the Quakers, too, they denied the necessity of an ordained ministry. Their informal meetings for worship frequently held during the week, and open to members of any church party, were often attended by the Mennonites. Collegia were formed in many Mennonite congregations. Galenus Abrahams de Haan, prominent Mennonite minister at Amsterdam, as will be seen a little later, became a leader of a Collegiant group in his own city.

There can be little doubt but that all these disturbing religious movements above mentioned with which the Mennonites were more or less closely affiliated had considerable influence upon the religious thinking of the denomination in the years that followed.

The War Among the Lambs (*Lammerenkrijgh*)

Not only did this affiliation with the Collegiants bring added oppression to certain Mennonite groups by both the state church and government, but it was also partly responsible for another far reaching division among the Mennonites themselves. The trouble began in the Flemish congregation in Amsterdam. This congregation was unfortunate in having on its bench of preachers, two practising physicians, both chosen by lot, and still serving without pay—Galenus Abrahams deHaan, and Samuel Apostool. Of these two, deHaan was the more progressive and liberal minded. He came from a long line of religious leaders. His father had been a barber and surgeon, a usual combination in those days, as well as a preacher, which was not usual except among Mennonites; and his great-grandfather was the martyr, Gillis van Aachen, mentioned elsewhere. Being a student of medicine, as well as of theology, he could not help being

influenced by the scientific discoveries and the radical philosophical theories that were revolutionizing the thought of his day—the contributions of such men as Harvey, Descartes and Kepler, some of whom lived in his own city of Amsterdam.

After deHaan had been elected to the ministry by his congregation, in 1646, he attended the Collegiant meetings in his city, and he seemingly was in sympathy with their liberal views and practises. He was a great friend of youth, and in his later years, seeing the need among his people of a trained ministry, he gathered together a number of likely young candidates for theological instruction, thus laying the foundation for the later Mennonite Seminary. Like the Collegiants, he placed little stress on set confessions and prescribed creeds, teaching rather that the Scriptures alone should furnish the basis of one's religious faith.

Not all the members of deHaan's congregation agreed with these tolerant views. In the year 1664, about seven hundred, under the leadership of the other doctor-preacher, Apostool, still demanding a set confession of faith, withdrew from the mother church, and set up an establishment of their own which met in a building with the sign of the Sun, for which reason they came to be known as the *Sonnists*, while the original church, worshipping near a house with the sign of a lamb, were distinguished as the *Lammists*. This new movement soon spread beyond the borders of the local congregation into many churches throughout the Netherlands, swallowing up many of the earlier small factions, and dividing the whole brotherhood once more into a liberal and conservative wing. Both Sonnist and Lammist societies were formed throughout the land. The conservative Sonnists rigidly defended the orthodox views of the trinity, with a decided trend toward Calvinism, and the traditional re-

ligious practises forbidding their members to fellowship in any way with the Collegiants; to share the communion table with them, or to follow their Quaker practise of permitting laymen to preach or prophesy. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the division was finally healed over.

English Quakers Visit Holland

It was about this time, too, the middle of the seventeenth century, that the English Quakers, who had just started in England, tried to get a foothold among the Dutch Mennonites, from whom perhaps they may, in an earlier period, have imbibed some of their distinctive doctrines and practises, and with whom at least they still had much in common. All the pioneer founders, and missionaries, including Fox and Penn themselves, made repeated visits to the Mennonite congregations along the lower Rhine on proselyting tours, usually with but slight success, however. As early as 1657, according to a Quaker historian

“Ames, Stubbs, and Caton came over to Holland, they moved some of their own countrymen with their Doctrines to such a degree that they raised some disturbance in the Reformed church, and brought a few of the Country Mennonites to their side, and these made the name of Quakers first known in these Provinces.”

A little later, the same writer, speaking of the work of Caton continues

“He goes back to Amsterdam in which city there is a small church gathered and that principally of the Dutch Anabaptists.”

The Yearly Meeting of London in 1694 reports that at Twist and Horne

“there is great openness among the Mennonites to hear the Friends tell the Truth.”

That not all the Mennonites, however, were always eager to hear the "Truth" is evident from an episode which took place in the course of the proselyting tour of an English Quaker to the Amsterdam Mennonites, who in his visit observed

"many things that he disliked among both the churches of which the whole city consisted (Reformed and Mennonite) and he wrote a letter to each. 'Twas a tart letter full of contumelious Accusations and Reproofs as if the religion of both of them was only a barren profession, and their lives the height of all manner of Hipocracie and Impiete, a denial of God, concluding with a denunciation of threats and execrations against them as if it were in the name and by the command of the Divine Being himself. The letters were sent to Harling by Cornelis Rudolf, and James Byland, the father and son, all of them citizens of Amsterdam, and former Mennonites, but now turned Quakers. So to Harling they all go."

These letters were to be tried first on the Mennonites evidently, and then if successful, upon the Reformed; but the well laid plans of the zealous missionary miscarried, as well laid plans sometimes do. Before he reached the Reformed, the message bearer had been cast into jail by the magistrate of the city, where he remained for some time. The "tart" letter with its "contumelious Accusations" was too tart, seemingly, for even the long suffering Mennonites of Harling; for "almost all of them resented it as a hainous thing and set upon him (Rudolf) with great clamor and violence."

Among the staunch defenders of the Mennonite cause against the onslaught of the Quakers during this period was Galenus Abrahams deHaan, the Amsterdam preacher mentioned above. Croese, the Quaker historian, leaves us an interesting account of a debate held in Amsterdam, in 1677, between deHaan on the one hand and both George Fox and William Penn on the other,—

"William Penn and Galen Abraham, a physician and preacher among those Mennonites which we account of all, or the most part of them at least to be Socinians, at the same time almost at Amsterdam, disputed at a private house of the signs of the new church, and extraordinary call of the ministers. And after such a manner as Penn who after the manner of the nation, spake nothing but in a premeditated and set form of speech, showed upon this occasion that when he had a mind to it, he was not wanting in the faculty of answering extempore to the sudden and large Discourse of others; but the other (Galenus) so abounded in multitudes of words as he never came to the stress of the matter where the cause lay; and where he could not tell how to bring close arguments to the purpose, he either very ingeniously put off answering at all, or turned it into a Joke and Banter, and so it ended after the same rate as most Disputations commonly do."

Sewell, another Quaker historian, reporting the same event adds a few more details in his account that are worth recording here,

"Galenus answered that nobody now-a-days could be accepted as a messenger of God unless he confirmed his doctrine by miracles. Penn denied this and said miracles are not necessary. Fox then spoke something to the matter; but being short breathed and went several times away which some were ready to impute to a passionate temper but I well know that therein they do him wrong. This dispute was a troublesome business, for the parties on both sides were fain to speak by an interpreter which generally was performed so imperfectly that at last the conference broke off without coming to a decision, although many weighty arguments were objected against the position."

Dutch Anabaptists and Mennonites in England

In the meantime many Dutch Anabaptists and Mennonites had found their way across the Channel to England all through the latter part of the sixteenth century, and their story may as well be told here as elsewhere. In fact, long before the Reformation there had been

more or less of commercial intercourse between the wool-growers and manufacturers of the island kingdom and the skilled artisans and textile workers of the Lowland towns. But during the sixteenth century, and especially under the reign of the last two bigoted Spanish rulers there was a steady stream of Dutch immigrants of a new type arriving on the east coast of England—political and religious refugees. Among the latter were hundreds, and perhaps thousands of Anabaptists.

Not that Anabaptists, of course, were more welcome to Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth than to Philip; but mingling with throngs of political refugees against whom there was no suspicion, speaking a foreign tongue, and practising a strange religion, and leading a quiet, unobtrusive life, these Dutch Anabaptists were able to hide their identity, and escape the persecution that would have been theirs had they been natives of the same faith.

That the English ruling authorities, however, both state and church, were as little inclined to endure the tolerant views of the Anabaptists, as were those of other countries, once they were recognized, is clearly evident. As early as 1534 Henry the Eighth issued a royal proclamation against them, ordering them out of the kingdom on pain of death. This decree was repeated by every English ruler during the sixteenth century. That the church, too, feared Anabaptism as modern Europe fears Bolshevism, and perhaps with as little cause, is shown by the fact that every confession of faith of the various churches, Anglican and Presbyterian, found it worthwhile among other articles of their belief, to specifically repudiate all the dominant Anabaptist, or Mennonite doctrines.

To be sure, in the early part of the century, it was undoubtedly the Münster brand of the movement that the English feared; and then too, it must be remembered that

the term Anabaptist at that time, like Bolshevist of today, was used to signify all kinds of radical beliefs and movements. But the specific mention in the confessions of the last half of the century of such distinctive subjects as the magistracy, oath, war, and even Menno's strange views on the incarnation is evidence that the Anabaptists who came to England during that period were of the Mennonite type—in other words were Mennonites.

With all their attempts to live a secluded life, however, native Anabaptists, as well as the Dutch Mennonite refugees, were occasionally sent to the block. One example of the latter was that of a group of some thirty Dutch exiles whom a contemporary writer spoke of as "Menno's" people, and who were arrested on Easter day of 1575 while holding a religious service in a private home in one of the suburbs of London. Suspecting their identity, the Bishop of London, before whom they were tried, asked them four test questions as to their beliefs regarding the oath, the magistracy, baptism, and the incarnation. Satisfied that they were Mennonites, the bishop sent them back to prison. The prisoners had many friends among the people. Foxe, the English martyrologist, sent a petition to Queen Elizabeth in their behalf, as did the Dutch Reformed church in London. But all to no avail. Five of the number recanted, who after doing public penance in the courtyard of St. Pauls, were set free; a number of them escaped; and a few were released. But two of them, Jan Pieters, "a poor man upward of fifty years old, with nine children," and Hendrick ter Woort, "a handsome and respectable man about twenty-six years old, a goldsmith by trade, who had been married about eight weeks before he was apprehended," paid the extreme penalty for their beliefs, being burned at the stake, at Smithfield, according to the Mennonite martyrologist, van Braght, "without even being dis-

patched first by strangling or with powder according to the custom of the country."

While Anabaptism as a whole made little headway during this period among the native Englishmen, yet it can not be denied that the various separatist movements, which seemingly adopted half of the Anabaptist program, and which arose during the latter part of the century in the very centers along the eastern coast where Dutch artisans and political and religious refugees were most numerous, owed much of their distinctive principles to the Dutch Anabaptist leaven.

One of the earliest of the leaders for an independent church was Robert Browne of Norwich, who was forced by religious persecution, in 1580, to take his congregation to Holland. Here at Middleburg, he established his church for a time based on congregational principles. A part of his group, it is said, later joined the Mennonites, but Browne himself returned to England, where after a period of disappointment, he gave up the struggle, and lapsed back into the Anglican fold.

Not long after, another separatist congregation was formed in London under the leadership of Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth. They too, were forced into exile, finally gathering together their congregation again in Amsterdam.

The most important of these independent groups, however, was the one at Gainsboro, and the neighboring village of Scrooby under the pastorate of one, John Smythe. This congregation is of interest chiefly because in its membership it included a number of men who later played an important role in both English and American political and religious history—John Robinson, William Brewster and William Bradford of the Pilgrim fathers; and Thomas Helwys and John Murton, founders of the English Baptist church. In 1606, Smythe and his Gains-

boro followers found it expedient to leave for Amsterdam; John Robinson, who in the meantime had become pastor of the Scrooby contingent of the original congregation, followed with his party to the same city the following year. Smythe, refusing to join the Johnson group which had already been established in Amsterdam, set up his own independent congregation. Robinson also decided to retain his separate organization, but soon left Amsterdam for Leyden.

Although all these English groups in Holland must have come into close contact with the Dutch Mennonites, with whom they had much more in common in their religious doctrines and civic principles than with the Dutch state church, yet only few of the laymen, and but one of the leaders accepted in full the Mennonite position on complete religious toleration and a democratic and voluntary church.

In fact it is a question whether even the Pilgrim Fathers fully realized all the implications of religious toleration; whether their separatism, like that of the Puritans after them, was not rather of a one sided-character—toleration for themselves without the corresponding willingness to grant the same privileges to all others. In the light of their early American experiences, when they had it within their full power to put their theories into practise, it is questionable whether they advocated, as did the Anabaptists, complete separation of church and state—full soul liberty. Seemingly none of them were willing to follow separatism to its logical conclusion. Repeatedly, Robinson as well as Johnson and other leaders found it expedient to deny the charge that they were Mennonites, or Anabaptists.

John Smythe, however, and a goodly portion of his company had the courage to follow the path of religious

liberty all the way to its source—Anabaptism—a voluntary, democratic church, composed of new-born men and women, entirely free from the state, granting to all complete freedom of conscience in matters of religion. Smythe came to this conclusion within two years after his arrival at Amsterdam. Convinced by this time that the New Testament church must not only be independent, but it must also be voluntary, composed of a regenerate, and necessarily adult membership, he naturally concluded that baptism, the symbol of initiation into the church, if it meant anything at all in the new order of things, must be administered upon confession of faith only. To think, was to act. His old baptism consequently, administered in infancy, was not valid. But where could he find the baptism he desired.

Evidently the language barrier and other forbidding circumstances prevented the Gainsboro exiles at this time from cultivating that spirit of fellowship with any of the neighboring Mennonite churches which naturally would have suggested affiliation with that body of believers. Not finding just then what he regarded as a true New Testament church anywhere, Smythe baptized himself, then Helwys and Murton, and some forty of his followers.

A year later, the Se-Baptist's tender conscience again troubled him. In the meantime his small congregation had been worshipping in a large bake house owned by a Waterlander Mennonite by the name of Jan Munter. Through Munter, Smythe came into closer contact with the Mennonite church, of which Lubbert Gerriets was pastor. Satisfied now that the Mennonites were a true Apostolic church, and troubled somewhat, no doubt, by his hasty act of self-baptism, the former now, with thirty-one of his members, applied to the Mennonites for ad-

mission into their body.³ Helwys, Murton and a few others, however, refused to follow their leader in this step, not because they denied that the Mennonites were a true church, but rather because their pride forbade the repudiation of their earlier act of rebaptism. They in turn wrote the Mennonites requesting that Smythe's application be refused.

The Mennonites, due to internal disagreement, at first delayed action. Soon after this, Smythe died. Finally his followers were accepted into membership with the Mennonite congregation. In the meantime, in 1611, Helwys and his group had returned to their former home where they organized the first Baptist church in England. For a number of years Helwys and his followers kept up a friendly correspondence with the Amsterdam Mennonites, finally applying for union with them, ready even to waive the differences that had thus far kept them apart, divergent views regarding the oath, magistracy, and war resistance. But the Amsterdam Mennonites, still true to form, delayed, and flirted with the idea of union too long. With the introduction of immersion among the English Baptists in 1640, and as the native movement became more securely rooted in its own soil, all hope of a union between the two vanished. From now on the two branches of the Anabaptist movement—the Continental Mennonites, and the English Baptists each went its own separate way.

As to the direct influence of the Dutch Mennonites upon the various English separatist movements, it will thus be seen, there may be some difference of opinion.

3 For a brief summary of the facts regarding Smythe's relation to the Amsterdam Mennonites, see W. T. Whitten, Secretary of the English Baptist Historical Society, in an article in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Goshen, Indiana, Vol. IV. No. 4 page 306; also J. G. de Hoop-Scheffer; *de Brownisten te Amsterdam*.

In the case of the Baptists, as just noted, the connection is direct and clear. All Baptist historians acknowledge not only a spiritual kinship with the early continental Anabaptists, but also a direct connection with the Dutch Mennonites. All claim Menno Simons as one of the heroes of their church.

In the case of Congregationalism the relationship is not so direct. It would seem, however, that in view of the fact that the cardinal principle of Congregationalism—an independent church, was an Anabaptist doctrine well known for nearly a century in the regions where the former had its origin, one can hardly escape the conviction of some connection. Many Congregational historians acknowledge a heavy debt to the Dutch Anabaptists and Mennonites, both in Holland and England, for substantial contributions to English Congregationalism.

Quakerism too, must have drawn upon Mennonite sources for many of its essential doctrines and practises. It, too, first saw the light of day in those regions of south-eastern England where the other separatist movements began; and incorporated within its body of beliefs almost in toto the tenets of the continental Mennonites including the whole program of non-resistance, with all its implications.

A Dream of Utopia

It may not be out of place here to briefly mention the first attempt to plant a Dutch Mennonite colony on this side of the Atlantic. Cornelis Pieter Plockhoy of Zeirik Zee, a member seemingly of one of the Mennonite Socinian groups, a dreamer of social utopias, appeared in London in 1659, petitioning parliament to establish somewhere in England or Ireland an experimental co-operative commonwealth in which there was to be religious toleration, the abolition of all poverty, and perfect

equality of all classes, economic, social, and political.

Failing to accomplish his object in London, the Dutch reformer returned to Holland, where he actually succeeded in interesting the city of Amsterdam, which had already made several unsuccessful attempts to establish a colony on its recently purchased lands in New Netherlands along the Delaware, in his scheme. According to the agreement made with the city authorities, Amsterdam was to furnish the money for locating a colony of twenty-five Mennonite families in the new world.

Plockhoy provided an elaborate set of rules, regulating in minutest details the whole political and economic life of the colony. Like the proposed experiment in England, this colony was to be placed on a co-operative basis. All were to be equal in their rights and privileges. There was to be no slavery; free schools were to be set up for all. There was to be religious toleration; but seemingly, to insure the new venture against any disturbing religious influences from the outside, "Catholics, Jews, Stiff-necked Quakers, and foolhardy believers in the Millenium" were barred from joining the settlement. In keeping, too, with the general Socinian practise of granting laymen as well as the ordained preachers the right to conduct religious worship, therefore regarding ordained clergymen unnecessary, perhaps, in a new struggling colony, there was to be no provision for gentlemen of the cloth.

The known facts about this interesting social and religious Mennonite experiment are few. We do know that Plockhoy actually succeeded, in 1662, in planting his colony on the Horekill, in the present state of Delaware; and that only two years later, the English conquest of the Dutch settlements in New Amsterdam, "plundered what belonged to the Quaking Society of Plockhoy to a naile"; and that, in 1694, Plockhoy, now grown old and blind,

together with his wife, coming from somewhere, wandered into the village of Germantown one day where he found a home for his few remaining years among his fellow Mennonites, who in the meantime had been more successful than he in establishing a Mennonite colony farther up on the Delaware.

The Peak of Mennonite Achievement

From what has already been said, it is quite evident that the seventeenth century, and especially the latter part, marked the peak of Mennonite growth both as to numbers and as to spiritual and cultural self-consciousness. Much of the enduring literature of the denomination was written and published during this period. As already suggested, nearly all the confessions of faith originated within the first half of the century. The first attempt to collect and publish the complete works of Menno Simons was made in 1646;⁴ and the last Dutch edition appeared in 1681.

The most important Mennonite production of the time was the famous *Martyrs Mirror*, compiled in 1660 by Tiel-eman Jansz van Braght, a Mennonite preacher at Dordrecht. This monumental collection of martyr stories of the Anabaptists and others of the defenseless faith, was not entirely an original work, but a revision and an enlargement of several former collections published earlier in the century. The last Dutch edition to appear was printed in 1685, after which the interest in martyr stories began to decline. The book has been printed once in Germany since, and several times in America in both the German and English languages, and once in England, but never again in Holland.

Not to be omitted here is mention of the well known *Biestkins Bible*, published especially for the Mennonites

4 A partial collection was published earlier.

by Niklaus Biestkins, a Mennonite publisher at Emden, for the first time in the preceding century, but running through more than fifty reprintings before the close of the seventeenth. This edition was based on the Lutheran translation, with such minor changes as suited more nearly the Mennonite views on controversial passages. It was the first Dutch Bible to introduce paragraph divisions in the text. It was in general use among the Mennonites until well toward the close of the eighteenth century: and among the Old Flemish at Balk, as late as 1837.

Among other Mennonite authors of this period must be included Tobias Govertsz van den Wyngaert, who was born in Amsterdam in 1587, and served his church as minister for fifty years. He was the author of numerous theological treatises well known in his day, and represented his congregation at the Dordrecht convention in 1632, which drew up the Dordrecht confession of faith.

Jan Philip Schabalje, for a time minister at Alkmaar, but later in life a book seller in Amsterdam, also wrote a number of books, including a *Life of Jesus*, published at Alkmaar in 1647, and reissued several times afterward. His best known work, however, among later Mennonite readers was a brief history of the Biblical world called *Lusthof des Gemoeds*, recited somewhat after the fashion of the famous legend of the Wandering Jew, by a disembodied spirit, who, returning from his ethereal abode at stated intervals, received his information of what was going on in this world from the lips of Adam, Noah, and one called Simon Cleophas. The book first appeared in 1635, was reissued several times soon after, and by 1744, according to one historian had already gone through fifty editions. It finally appeared in a German edition under the title *Die Wandelnde Seele*. It has also appeared a number of times in America, a

recent edition published in Philadelphia claiming to be the sixteenth. The book has also been turned into English several times. It seems to have a peculiar fascination for the Pennsylvania Germans, and is still widely read by them, both Mennonites and others.

Hans de Ries has already been mentioned in this chapter.

Lubbert Gerrits, co-author with de Ries of the Waterland Confession of 1610, as well as de Ries himself really belongs to the preceding century. Gerrits was born at Amersfort in 1535, and was ordained as elder by Dirk Philips at Hoorn in 1559. In the Flemish-Frisian controversy, in 1567, his congregation sided in with the Frisians; and thus Gerrits remained the minister of a Frisian and Upper German congregation. Later on, because of differences between himself and the majority of his congregation on questions of the ban and other strict disciplinary measures, he took the more liberal side, and as a result was expelled by the conservatives. He then became the leader in Amsterdam of what was known as the "Loose" Frisian wing of the denomination. A little later this group joined with the Upper Germans and the Waterlanders into a united congregation. Besides his co-authorship of the deRies confession, Gerrits wrote a number of religious treatises. He was a particular friend of the poet Vondel, and had his portrait painted by the celebrated painter M. J. Mierevelt. He died in 1612.

Although the Mennonites of this period were noted in the main for their achievements in the business world, yet they contributed their full share to the cultural and scientific development of their day. They took especially to medical science. There was an unusual number of doctors among them; and since their ministry was unsalaried and untrained theologically, Mennonite preach-

ers were frequently chosen from the medical profession. Besides Samuel Apostool, and his colleague, Galenus Abrahams deHaan, doctor-preachers of the Amsterdam congregation, already mentioned, might be added the name of Anton Dale, drafted into the ministry from the doctor's office in the church at Haarlem, a great linguist in addition, but not a popular preacher because he was too prone to flaunt his erudition by the frequent use of Latin and Greek phrases, which were beyond the understanding of his congregation. He devoted much of his spare time to the writing of theological treatises, especially against the Socinians, and also a book on medical healing which attained considerable popularity in his day.

The most distinguished Mennonite doctors of this century, though they were not preachers, were undoubtedly the Bidloo brothers, Nickolaus, of Zaandam, personal physician to Peter the Great of Russia during his ship building student days in Holland, and later the director of the Czar's first school of medicine in Moscow; Gottfried, body physician to William III; and Lambert, a well known apothecary of the day.

Another famous preacher during this time, though not a doctor, was Cornelisz Claesz Anslo, a wealthy Amsterdam merchant, elected to the ministry in the Waterlander church in 1617. Though a famous preacher, Anslo is best known because of his intimate friendship with the great Dutch Mennonite poet, Joost van den Vondel who was at the same time also a deacon in the same church⁵; and also for his association with the great

5 Vondel's popularity in Amsterdam today is shown by the perpetuation of his name in the city's leading park. Not only Rembrandt, but Ruyjsdael also, the famous painter, and Spinoza, the philosopher, were all intimately associated with the Mennonites of Amsterdam, though not likely actual members. Dr. Kuehler, however, maintains that Rembrandt was a Mennonite.

painter, Rembrandt, who painted several portraits of the preacher, including the famous picture *A Mennonite Preacher and the Widow* now a prized possession of the National Gallery in Berlin.

Not to be omitted here among the list of famous Mennonite preachers of the time, although he properly belongs to the following century rather than to the seventeenth is Jan Deknatel, who was born in Norden, in 1698, and died in Amsterdam in 1759. After a period of study in the Remonstrant seminary in the latter city, he was ordained to the ministry in 1725. Ten years later he became one of the founders of a training school for ministers in his own church, himself remaining for a time one of the instructors. Deknatel's prominence among the religious leaders of his city is evidenced by the fact that both of the great leaders of the religious revival of the early eighteenth century, John Wesley and Count Zinzendorf, visited him in his home and heard him preach. The former speaks of Deknatel in his *Journal* in terms of the highest praise, and acknowledges his indebtedness to the Mennonite preacher in his own spiritual life; while the latter shared a communion service with Deknatel in his own home on the occasion of one of his visits. Jan Deknatel, being a great preacher, wrote a number of books, including a collection of sermons, some of which were translated into German, and widely read among German speaking Mennonites in both Europe and America.

Hermanus Schyn, too, outlived the seventeenth century, being born in 1662, and dying in 1727. Like many of his fellow preachers, he, too, was both physician and preacher; and is best known among his churchmen as the author of an early history of the Mennonites, written in both the Latin and the Dutch tongues, revised, enlarged and republished by another Amsterdam preacher,

Gerhard Maatschoen later in the eighteenth century. These are only a few of a long list of prominent men who might be mentioned in a history of the Dutch Mennonites.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY A PERIOD OF DECLINE

The eighteenth century witnessed a great decline among the Dutch Mennonites both numerically and spiritually. The decrease in the entire Mennonite population, according to some writers, was from one hundred sixty thousand in 1700, to thirty thousand by 1820. In many cases whole congregations disappeared, almost one hundred it was said; and in nearly all the larger cities there were material losses. The Mennonite population in Amsterdam fell from approximately twenty-five hundred in 1743, to thirteen hundred in 1832; while in Haarlem the reduction during the same period was from three thousand to one thousand. Other cities told the same story.

The reasons for this loss in membership were many and varied; some general, others specific. First of all, perhaps, should be mentioned the spirit of liberalism which dominated the religious life and thought of all western Europe during this period. The Mennonites in the prosperous commercial Dutch cities did not altogether escape the blighting influences of English Deism, and French and German rationalism, to say nothing of the Socinianism of their own country of that day. The liberalizing influences of the French Revolution only added impetus to these tendencies among the Mennonites. Naturally the growing laxity in enforcing the old traditional regulations against mixed marriages, open communion, and worldly conformity in general contributed but little toward holding together a small religious group, the members of which were still but a tolerated people;

and denied social and civil privileges which would be freely granted them if they cast their lot with the state church. One writer suggests that toleration is but a poor match for persecution in steeling the human heart against worldly temptations. Some wanted office; others social standing; and still other's wives or husbands of the Reformed faith. All these could be had by joining the state church; and many went over. The old regulations against most of these practises had been largely abandoned among the more liberal wings of the church by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The lack of trained preachers, too, and a dearth of preachers of any sort, is given as another reason for the decline. With no adequate facilities of their own for training their preachers, the larger city congregations were inclined to select such as had been trained in the Remonstrant schools, as already seen, and frequently even the Remonstrants themselves, whose liberal views contributed little to the maintenance of Mennonite unity; and with little material support, for the *Liefdepreeker* was still a common institution, and in the case of the smaller country churches no support at all, there was small inducement for the young men of the church to enter the ministerial profession.

To all these specific causes should be added another, more general, but nevertheless not less effective—the loosely organized congregational type of church government. Experience proves that a loosely organized religious movement can not compete with a highly organized, strictly governed, rigidly dogmatic church. History repeated itself in the case of the Mennonites.

Socinianism Again

Although the state clergy let up in their campaign of heresy hunting against the Mennonites for a time dur-

ing the latter part of the seventeenth century, they returned to the attack again with renewed determination during the early part of the eighteenth. Reluctant to give up any of their prerogatives and special privileges as leaders of the established church, they regarded with deep-seated suspicion any rival religious movement that might threaten this special status. As in all state churches, loyalty to the orthodox doctrines as formulated by their own theological doctors, was made the true test of the Christian faith by the Dutch Reformed clergy. Socinianism especially, which was unpopular with both the state and the church, remained a popular object of attack throughout the century. If any dissenting church of the period could be saddled with the charge of Socinian tendencies it would not be difficult to secure the co-operation of the state authorities in bringing about its suppression.

The fight against the Mennonites was especially bitter in the province of Friesland, where they were still the leading Protestant rival of the state institution. While it may be true that some of the more liberal of the Waterlander churches were more or less tinged with Socinian ideas during this time, especially since the "Lammist-Sonnist" controversy of the preceding century, yet there were a large number of congregations in Friesland and elsewhere in the Netherlands that were not. All Mennonites, however, whether liberal or otherwise, were easy marks for the state theologians. Mennonite preachers, as already frequently noted, not being theologically minded, consequently were not adept in the art of framing their religious views in the correct dogmatic theological phraseology of the state churchmen.

The charge of Socinianism, therefore, or any other unorthodoxy, for that matter, could be easily made against the Mennonites, who preferred Biblical phrase-

ology to that of the theologians. In 1719, a Waterlander preacher in Leeuwarden was denied the right to preach by the provincial government, because his views were not acceptable to the state clergy. In 1722, the same governing authorities passed a regulation demanding that all Mennonite preachers submit to an investigation conducted by the Reformed clergy on the questions of the trinity, whether the children who died in infancy should be eternally blessed, whether the godless must suffer eternal punishment, and whether the punishment after death would be inflicted on the same earthly body, or a new one. A little later two more Mennonite preachers were deposed.

Refusing to sign these articles unqualifiedly, and fearing a general campaign on the part of the government to close all Mennonite churches, the Waterland congregations in Friesland met in a conference in 1738, under the presidency of Johannes Stinstra, popular preacher of the Haarlem church, in which a request was made to the government asking for a repeal of the restrictions that were being imposed upon their religious liberties. Little attention, however, was paid to this request. In fact the controversy increased in bitterness, and soon centered about a book of sermons published by Stinstra in which the clergy claimed to find evidences of the proscribed doctrines. This opposition spread, until the whole Reformed church took a hand in the matter, as well as the temporal authorities, and various Universities throughout the Netherlands, to whom questions of theological orthodoxy were usually submitted for solution. All these authorities with the sole exception of a lone professor of the University of Franeker, found against Stinstra, whereupon the Friesland government in 1743, forbade him to preach. It was not until 1757, that he was again reinstated. By this time the heresy

hunting mania had about run its course; and strange to say in the last named year the esrtwhile outlawed preacher was actually invited to preach in the Mennonite church of the capitol city before the assembled Estates, the very authorities that had earlier deposed him. As noted elsewhere, by 1795, the Reformed church had lost its special privileges as a state church; and absolute religious toleration, with equal religious and civil rights for all churches was established.

A New Confession of Faith

A new confession of faith, the first to appear for nearly a century, the so-called Cornelis Ris confession, though of rather local interest at first, and likely not widely accepted in the Netherlands in its day, yet it expresses fairly well, perhaps, the theological views of the more liberally minded Mennonites of that time. Cornelis Ris was the minister of a church in Hoorn, North Holland. He formulated this confession evidently to serve as a common basis of faith for the union, in 1747, of two former separate congregations in the city—one a Waterlander, the other of the Frisian persuasion. But seemingly he also kept in mind the need of justifying the views of the Mennonites against their attackers. The Ris statement agreed with the anti-Socinian doctrines of the state church on such controversial questions as the trinity; the incarnation, and the redemptive functions of Jesus, expressed in Biblical, rather than in philosophical phraseology, however; but on the other hand, hesitated to freely endorse their hyper-Calvinistic views on the freedom of the will, and predestination. Ris' attempt to satisfy both his conscience and the state church at the same time on this point is interesting. "God decreed," he says, "to impart His love, His grace, and His gifts in larger measure to some than to others, and this according

to His own will and pleasure, but His loving kindness is so great and so far reaching, and so all inclusive, that no one is excluded therefrom without just cause." At any rate there is little need for mortal man to puzzle his brain about such matters, so thinks Ris, for "in the wisdom and ways of God, especially in this matter there are depths which will ever be regarded beyond our ability to fathom in this life."

On such Mennonite doctrines as baptism on confession of faith, non-resistance, the oath, and opposition to the holding of civil office, the Ris confession held the usual orthodox Mennonite views; on certain practises on which Mennonites were divided, the author was inclined to straddle the issue, attempting to satisfy all parties. On baptism he justified both forms. Baptism, he said "we understand to be an immersing of the whole body in water, or a liberal sprinkling with water (which we in these northern latitudes consider more generally appropriate since the same blessings are signified). On the church ban, another source of endless confusion, moderation is advised; as a final measure of discipline the unfaithful

"must finally by a decision of the whole congregation be excluded from membership, and denied all church fellowship until he is truly converted, and gives evident proof thereof. However, all must be done with true regard to position and circumstance, yet without respect to person."

Marriage, too, should be "in the Lord"; and to be happy "we consider it essential as much as possible to remain within one's own church communion."

As already stated, this Ris confession was not widely accepted in the Netherlands, but came into common use among the churches in Germany, especially in Prussia; and in 1902 it was published in America as an acceptable

statement of faith by the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America.

The Dutch Mennonites as Seen Through the Eyes of a German Visitor

A good description of the various brands of the Dutch Mennonites of this period is to be found in a book written by a German, Frederick Rues, in 1743, who had come to the Netherlands especially to make a study of the Mennonites. According to this book the various Mennonite factions might well be classified under two general heads—the *Fine*, and the *Coarse*. Space does not justify here anything like a detailed description of the different groups still existing except to suggest that under these two general heads are represented every shade of religious practise, ranging from the extremely conservative Old Flemish, to the ultra liberal wings of the Waterlanders, and Remonstrants. The *Fine* still represented fairly well at this time what all Mennonites had once been; while the *Coarse* pointed the way to what all would finally be in the future.

Among the practises and beliefs still common to the various groups of the *Fine*, were rigid adherence to the old confessions of faith, a close following of the teaching of Menno, including his view of the incarnation and his strict use of the ban as a disciplinary measure. Because of this strict adherence to the teachings of Menno, these groups of the *Fine* wished to be known as Mennonites, in contrast with the liberals who preferred the less personal name of Doopsgezinde. Among the "All Finest," an excommunicant was not permitted to attend meeting with his former brethren. Marriage with outsiders was still forbidden; while candidates for membership from other factions were received only upon rebaptism. Shunning of an excommunicant was still common, in-

cluding in its application the conjugal relations. Among one branch, however, the Danzigers, the latter practise was not carried beyond the point of forbidding the husband or wife in question to eat at the same table with the one placed under the ban. Nonresistance was practised to its logical limits. Suing at law was not thought of, nor holding of office. Carrying of side arms, a common social custom of the day, was prohibited, likewise the transportation of goods in an armed vessel.

Worldliness in all its varied forms was carefully guarded against. The cut of a man's coat, and the style of a woman's dress were still a matter of strict regulation. Black for both was the acceptable color. Buttons, shoestrings instead of buckles, wall pictures, stained glass and portraits were all on the proscribed list among the strictest divisions. Men were supposed to wear beards, but the preachers complained that it was becoming increasingly common for the young men to appear with shaved faces. Wigs of course in that bewigged age were not for the chosen of God, and were allowed only occasionally when the wearer could show that he wore one not from a sense of pride, but of necessity. What might constitute a necessary use was not quite clear.

All this was best exhibited among the humble country folk and the more conservative Fine groups. In the cities the women especially were inclined to chafe somewhat under these dress restrictions. They were beginning to wear silk gowns, and carry hymn books with silver clasps, if they could afford such luxury. Some of them powdered their hair, and even came to church, so says Rues, with palm leaf fans. The ministers, it is said, often looked through their fingers at these infractions of the rules among the sisters.

The ministry included three grades—the bishop or

elder, preacher, and deacon. The term bishop as used among the Mennonites is somewhat misleading, and requires further explanation. Since Mennonite government is congregational, the so-called bishop's jurisdiction does not extend beyond the limits of his own congregation. Each congregation thus may have its own bishop, who is the disciplinary official of the church; and alone has the power to baptize, administer the communion, and perform certain other rites within his own congregation, but not beyond. Elder, would be a more appropriate term. All ministers among the Fine served without pay; and were without special theological preparation. They came largely from the humble farmer folk, if in the country; and small tradesmen in the cities. Higher education for any purpose was not encouraged. Especially opposed were these strict groups to the schools of the Remonstrants. Since Mennonites were not permitted by the government to have schools of their own at this time, they were inclined to make use of those of the Reformed and Lutheran churches, a fact no doubt that did not a little to cut down their own church membership, and to increase correspondently that of the recognized churches.

Worship was simple and austere. Sermons were read from manuscript in a sing song fashion by the preacher as he sat in a chair somewhat elevated above those of his fellow preachers on the same platform in the forepart of the plain meeting house. Ministers wore no special garb, in contrast to those of the more liberal branches. The worshippers prayed, kneeling, and in silence. Collections for charity were taken after the services, but the collection boxes were placed outside of the building. Since absolute harmony was required as a prerequisite to the observance of the communion service, that rite was often irregularly celebrated. All factions among the conservatives were footwashers, although the ceremony

was observed in two forms. The Groningers made it a part of every communion service; while the Danzigers, following the teaching of Menno himself, practised it only when receiving visiting brethren. Thus far the Fine, who included perhaps not much more than one-fourth of the entire Mennonite body in the Netherlands.

The *Coarse* groups, making up the other three-fourths although still agreeing with the more conservative on most of the Mennonite fundamentals of doctrine, such as the independent church, adult baptism, rejection of the oath, and to a certain degree opposition to war, and the holding of civil office, yet they had discarded many of the ancient practises, and took a more liberal attitude on many others. The Waterlanders, as well as some of the other *Coarse* groups, permitted their members to carry side arms as a custom, not for use; to patronize owners of armed vessels; and to hold minor civil offices. The ban was used by them sparingly, only for the punishment of the grossest sins. Mixed marriages were not forbidden, nor were candidates for membership from other Mennonite factions required to be rebaptized. Worship was still simple, though somewhat more elaborate than among the Fine. Ministers were both partly salaried, and educated, though not always specifically for their ministerial calling; and bore the usual title *Dominie*, like those of the state church. Prayer was audible, Hans de Ries, the Waterlander minister in Alkmaar, being the first to introduce the practise among the Mennonite churches in the preceding century. Collections for various charitable purposes were regularly taken by ushers who carried small velvet bags to which were attached small bells, designed evidently for the benefit of drowsy worshippers. On the other hand, many of the old practises had been discarded, the kiss of brotherly love, practised on baptismal occasions, and at communion

time, footwashing, the marriage ceremony as a religious rite, and numerous others.

A third distinct group of Mennonites should be noted here—the *Swiss* refugees who had located in the vicinity of Groningen early in the century. These, however, were practically an alien people, belonging to the Dutch only geographically; and having little in common with the other groups either organically or culturally, though they shared the same Mennonite faith, and that in spite of the fact that all these groups had aided them most generously in their escape from Switzerland. The Swiss brought with them all their Swiss customs, and kept them throughout the century—beards, hooks and eyes, shoe strings, their Swiss dialect and all. Their story is really a part of that of the Mennonites of Switzerland, and can best be told elsewhere.

Mennonite Virtues

This description of the Dutch Mennonites of the eighteenth century, of course, would present but a very incomplete picture and distorted view of the real place they filled in the life of their times if left to itself. There is another side to the picture that should be presented. While it must be admitted that like many of the other independent religious groups of their day, the Mennonites, too, had wasted a great deal of time quarrelling over insignificant questions of human conduct, and burned up an abundance of energy defending inconsequential differences of practises and customs long since discarded, yet it must not be forgotten that Mennonites of every group were still a sincere, honest folk, among the most substantial, often the most wealthy and highly respected in the land. Rues says they were

“counted among the wealthiest of the country. If they were compelled to leave the land, the wealth and commerce of this country would suffer a very severe check.”

Their conscientious regard for genuine honesty, they carried over into every detail of their daily life. Their workmanship was sincere, and their products as honest as was their insistence upon a Godly life. As artisans, they never did shoddy work. So good was their reputation among their fellows for honest work that the term *Mennisten Infijn* (Mennonite fine through and through) became a sort of trade mark for any goods of especially high quality, in the commercial circles where Mennonites were known. Although somewhat contentious, as we have just noticed, over matters of doctrine and religious practise, yet in matters of obedience to the civil law, they seemingly were among the most law abiding citizens of the land. Such misunderstandings as they had among themselves over questions of personal rights they settled in their own churches. They seldom resorted to the courts of law. The head of the police department of the city of Amsterdam, who had filled that office for over half a century, could still say, in 1772, that during all that time not a single charge had ever been registered against a member of the large Mennonite congregation in that city.

They were also among the most liberal contributors to every worthy cause, especially to the appeal of those in distress. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they sent thousands of dollars to their oppressed brethren in Prussia, Moravia, Switzerland and the Palatinate. In 1709 they organized the *Society for Foreign Needs* which functioned for many years, originally to aid both the Swiss refugees and the Palatine Mennonites in the hour of their distress; but indirectly also to aid many of them to find a new home in the newly founded colony of Pennsylvania.⁶

6 For a further discussion of Dutch aid to the Swiss Mennonites see the chapter on Switzerland.

Nor were the Dutch Mennonites of this period without their influence upon the general cultural and intellectual life of the land. Two organizations which have played a prominent role in the educational progress, and scientific achievements of the Netherlands during the nineteenth century had a Mennonite origin. The well known *Teyler Institute* was founded in 1778, by a Mennonite, Pieter Teijler van der Hulst, whose ancestor, an English refugee, Thomas Taylor, had come to Holland in 1580, and joined the Haarlem Mennonite church. Pieter, who had become a wealthy manufacturer, left a large sum of money at his death for the founding of a museum of natural history and art gallery; and also, like the Swedish Nobel, after him, a fund, the income from which was to be distributed in the form of prizes to promote scientific and philosophical research. This society did much throughout the century for the cause of genuine scholarship, and is still functioning.

Unlike the Teyler Institute, the other foundation, also organized by a Mennonite, Jan Nieuwenhuizen, in 1784, and called the *Maatschappij tot Nut van t'Algemeen* (Society for the Promotion of the Common Good) was designed not so much for the promotion of original investigation, but rather for disseminating the general blessings of learning and culture among the common people. The first project undertaken by the society was the establishment of an elementary school system among the poorer elements of the population; for in Holland, as elsewhere, education was for the rich rather than the poor; and was regarded a church rather than a state function. This society must be given considerable credit for the founding of the Dutch public school system. In 1791, libraries for the poor were established, and later savings banks. True to the spirit of Mennonite toleration, the founder insisted that neither politics nor dog-

matic religion was to have any influence in any of the undertakings of the organization; but Catholics have never taken any part in this work. Like the Teyler Institute, the "*tot Nut*" as it is called, is still very much alive today. In 1927 the organization included three hundred and twenty-one local affiliated societies, supporting two hundred and five public libraries, and one hundred and fifty-two savings banks as well as many other enterprises for the benefit of the general public.⁷

THE FRENCH TIME

As everywhere else in Europe, so Holland, too, was permeated and greatly affected in its whole social and political fabric by the spirit of the French Revolution. Nor did the Mennonites entirely escape this influence. The most far reaching by-product of the Revolutionary era, so far as the Mennonites were concerned, was perhaps the complete separation of church and state in 1795, which for the first time in three hundred years, placed Mennonites on a basis of religious and civil equality with the hitherto privileged establishment. In 1809, the government offered subsidies, similar to those granted to the state church, to such Mennonite ministers as were willing to accept them. Later on help was also offered to Mennonite charitable institutions. Mennonites accepted these gifts but sparingly, however. During the French regime in Holland, Napoleon, with his passion for uniformity and system, attempted to bring all the different independent Mennonite congregations under one consolidated organization. But being congregational in their government, the Mennonites did not take kindly to this move; and after the downfall of the usurper, they

⁷ These statistics are not the most recent, but are quoted here because they are the most conveniently available to the author, and are perhaps as typical as any of more recent date.

again resumed their former system of democratic church government.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The most significant event in the history of the Dutch Mennonites during the early part of the nineteenth century was the organization, in 1811, of the *Allgemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit* (General Mennonite Society) for the purpose partly of helping weak and struggling congregations, but also to secure the united support of all for a theological seminary. By this time the factionalism that had kept the church divided for so many centuries had become considerably weakened; and with the organization of the A. D. S. the progress of unity of effort in carrying on the various common church enterprises was well under way.⁸ That the lack of a trained ministry had long been recognized among such leaders as de Haan, Deknatel, and others as one of the reasons for the decline of the church has already been referred to. But neither the local Amsterdam training school, started in a limited fashion as early as 1735, nor the Remonstrant institutions, which some of the Mennonite candidates still attended, proving satisfactory any longer, the A. D. S. now assumed the task of training preachers in the name of all the churches.

The Mennonite Seminary

This *Kweek* school as the seminary is called, has since affiliated with the University of Amsterdam, the

⁸ The A.D.S. has remained a mere society, although it finally grew in membership until it included practically all the Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands. It never assumed any law making power. Each congregation retains its independent ecclesiastical organization, selecting its own ministers, setting up its own standards of faith, and making its own rules.

two Mennonite professors supplied by the seminary being members of the theological department of the University faculty. This institution has been an important factor in unifying the various congregations; and by training practically all the preachers of the denomination, in permeating the whole church with the rather liberal views held by the seminary faculty almost from the start. Among some of the outstanding teachers during the past hundred years might be mentioned Samuel Mueller (1827-1857) S. Hoekstra (1857-1892), J. de HoopScheffer (1860-1890), S. Cramer (1890-1912), and the well known Mennonite historian, W. J. Kuehler, still serving. All of these men have exerted a wide influence both within and without their own church circles through their teaching and writing. The student body is never large. Since 1911 women students have been admitted; and women are assuming increasingly important positions both as pastors and on various governing church boards.

Missionary Interest

Other forms of organized church life followed in course of time. In 1849 a missionary society was established, which soon opened up several stations in the Dutch East Indies. The mission spirit in the Netherlands, however, has never been strong; and most of the support as well as workers before 1914 came from the outside, largely from the Russian and German Mennonites. In 1910, out of a total income for this cause of twenty thousand dollars, only two thousand, five hundred came from Holland, while three thousand, seven hundred was contributed by the German churches, and the rest, thirteen thousand, eight hundred came from Russia. The recent war, with the impoverishment of the German churches, and the almost total collapse of those of Russia, almost destroyed the whole mission cause. The Dutch support alone was,

not sufficient to keep up the work that had been started. For a few years it was hoped that the American Mennonites might help out the Dutch society; but the latter had troubles of their own during this time. The revived interest in various religious activities aroused by the *Gemeentedagbewegung* a movement to be described later in this chapter, fortunately rescued the mission enterprise from complete collapse; but it is doubtful whether it will ever recover the losses suffered by the inevitable defection of the Russian and German supporters.

The Old Order Changes

With this growing demand for united and organized effort in carrying on the work of the church, there continued, at an accelerated pace, the process of undermining the old traditions and customs which was already well under way by this time—traditions and practises which for centuries had marked the Mennonites as a peculiar people. The liberal forces set loose by the French Revolution; the growing spirit of nationalism agitating Europe throughout the first half of the century; as well as numerous more specific causes—the removal by the government of all religious and civil restrictions upon the dissenting religious groups; the unifying and liberalizing influences of the Mennonite seminary and the A. D. S.—all these as already intimated, tended to accelerate the movement that was already breaking up the old seclusiveness of the Mennonites. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Dutch Mennonites had already discarded many of the traditional religious practises and views of the Mennonite fathers.

Among the first of the ancient principles to go was that of non-resistance. For some time the Dutch Mennonites had been growing lukewarm in the observance of this doctrine. The French Revolution found many of

the young men willing to affiliate themselves with the patriotic spirit engendered throughout Holland by that event. Napoleon made no exception for religious scruples in his demand for conscripts. In the Belgian trouble in 1830, a number of young men, including several of the students in the seminary volunteered for service in that war. Up to 1850, it must be admitted, however, that most of the officials of the A. D. S., and the older leaders generally, except among a few of the extreme liberal groups, were reluctant to justify volunteer service; nor did they favor participation in political affairs, holding of political office, and accepting the state bounty offered to the ministers. According to the military regulations at that time, conscripts could be freed by the purchase of a substitute, a hardship for the poorer elements of course. But, in course of time, even these scruples disappeared. When in 1898 the new military law was passed without any special provision for exemption or for substitutes there was no protest from the Mennonites anywhere; in fact the Mennonite delegates in the States General at the time were the most outspoken in their opposition to any exemption clause for religious scruples. So far have the Mennonites in Holland departed from their old views on this matter that some time ago one of their number was nominated as Minister of War in the government. With the migration, in 1853, of the Old Frisian congregation at Balk to America to escape military service, and the liberal influences among the Mennonites in general there were few Mennonites left in the Netherlands who held to the views of Menno on this question.⁹

With the passing of non-resistance went also many of the other fundamental doctrines, not only of the Men-

9 This congregation affiliated with the Salem congregation of the Old Mennonites near Elkhart, Indiana, and still remains one of the most conservative congregations of the conservative Old Mennonite branch of the denomination.

nonite faith, but of dogmatic orthodox Christianity as well; and also, even among the more conservative groups, many old long established church practises, — among others, rigid discipline, *bruitentrou*, and unsalaried lay preachers.

Today, while a few of the ministers, and a larger number of laymen, might still be regarded as fairly conservative, and a greater number moderately liberal; yet a large majority of the leadership of the church would be considered as extremely unorthodox by even the most liberal groups of the American Mennonites, not only on the distinctive Mennonite principles in particular, but on the fundamentals of the Christian faith in general. This liberal majority would discard perhaps the whole doctrine of Christ's divinity, His atonement, and His redemptive power in the orthodox sense. Miracles are a myth. In fact the whole orthodox phraseology of the plan of salvation has become obsolete among them. Even the more conservative insist on being undogmatic. *Vrijzinnig* is the phrase with which they are prone to describe their religious views, which they insist, however, should be interpreted as freedom of belief, and is not to be confused with unbelief. The love of God, on the other hand, is greatly stressed in their preaching; and the Bible, freely interpreted, is still their standard of faith. Authors of nearly all the confessions of faith still in use among the Mennonites throughout the world today, the Dutch no longer follow any. In keeping with their spirit of toleration it is perhaps to be expected that the lamb and the lion should find little difficulty in lying down together. Conservatives and liberals have no difficulty in working side by side under the authority of the same A. D. S. Often two preachers of opposite views serve the same church. "Vrijzinnig" means toleration. Life, not dogma, they say, is the true test of ones

Christian faith. One of their recent historians, himself moderately liberal, characterizes the fundamental principles of present day Mennonitism in Holland as

1. Undogmatic
2. Baptism on confession of faith
3. Rejection of the oath
4. Congregational independence¹⁰

Realizing perhaps that they have strayed far from the views originally held by their founder, the descendants of Menno's folk now hesitate to call themselves Mennonites, preferring rather the more general term *Doopsgezinde*. Until recently they have not cultivated much interest in the leadership of Menno himself. The last edition of his works, as previously indicated, was published in 1681. With the exception of one or two brief sketches, no comprehensive study of his life has been written until the appearance in 1914 of the work by K. Vos, and the *History of the Dutch Mennonites in the Sixteenth Century* by Dr. W. J. Kuehler of the Seminary, in 1932.

The Periodical Literature

The periodical literature of today among the Dutch Mennonites is represented by the *Doopgezinde Bijdragen*, a year book which appeared irregularly from 1837 to 1916; the *Doopsgezinde Jaarboekje*, containing the names each year of the ministers, and other valuable current and historical information, appearing since 1902; the *Zondagsbode*, the official organ of the A. D. S., founded in 1887, and still issued; and a magazine called *Brieven*, representing the *Gemeentedagbeweging*, since 1917. Many of the larger churches have their own church papers and libraries.

10 J. Yntema, *de Doopgezinden*, 1930.

Remnants of the Old Faith

Although they have admittedly departed considerably from the old standards, the subjects of this sketch nevertheless, rather strange to say, have retained two of the ancient doctrines—insistence upon adult baptism, and rejection of the oath. Young people are given a long period of catechetical instruction before admission to church membership, and are seldom baptized before their twentieth year, and often later. There seems to be a tendency among some of the congregations to minimize the need of the ceremony at all. In some cases married couples attend church regularly, and enjoy all the usual privileges of membership, and assume all the obligations without ever being baptized. Some time ago there was an interesting case in one of the churches of several young men who were refused by the government the usual privilege of exemption from the oath because of the fact that they were not baptized, and thus not entitled to the exemption as Mennonites, although they had been regular paying members of the congregation. The objection to the oath, too, perhaps has been retained because, like adult baptism, it symbolizes religious toleration and separating of church and state, which have always remained, after all, two of the fundamental principles of Mennonitism; and which have always distinguished the Mennonites from the state churches of their day. It would seem, however, that with the rejection of non-resistance there would be little logical reason for refusing the oath.

The Dutch Mennonites retained also to a marked degree those sober virtues of moral integrity, and simplicity of living which all through their history distinguished their forefathers as a superior people.

Mennonite Meeting Houses

Mennonite meeting houses in the Netherlands, like

Quaker meeting houses in America, are still inclined to be severely plain and simple in appearance, without stained glass, tower or bell; and, if over one hundred years old, and in the city, likely to be located some distance back from the main street, a reminder of the days when Mennonites were still merely a tolerated people, with few civil and religious rights, and not permitted to carry on their proscribed worship in public places. The large church in Amsterdam is hidden from view by a group of office buildings between it and the street. One unacquainted with Mennonite ecclesiastical architecture would hardly suspect that the modest little door opening upon the Singel was an entrance to a house of worship. In Leeuwarden, Sneek, and a number of other cities the buildings in front of the church have since been removed, thus leaving an open court between the street and the meeting house.

The original meeting house along the Singel in Amsterdam, erected in the sixteenth century, and changed but little in its general style of architecture by later remodelings, is a fair sample of the old type of church structure. On the inside, the room is large and nearly square. Along the north wall, nearly in the middle, stands an elevated pulpit reached by a short stairway, and topped by a canopy something like a sounding board though not meant for that purpose. On each side of the pulpit extends a high bench for the use of the black-gloved, silk hatted ruling elders, and nearby another short bench for the song leader. Around the other three sides run two balconies, and directly beneath, on the first floor several rows of benches with long desks in front for Bibles and hymn books. These benches are for the exclusive use of the men of the congregation, just as they were two hundred years ago. The women are seated on movable chairs which occupy the large square in the

center of the floor. Under each of these chairs one still finds small perforated wooden boxes which are filled in winter with heated stones to warm the feet of the older women, a convenience common to our New England great-grandmothers in the colonial days. Over in one corner of the big room looms the big drum stove. The seating capacity of the house may be about fifteen hundred. Such in brief is the simple appearance of one of the oldest Mennonite meeting houses in the world, in which worships the largest, the most influential, and no doubt the wealthiest congregation of the entire denomination on either side of the Atlantic.¹¹

Church Loyalty

Church loyalty among the Dutch Mennonites is not taken as seriously as in America, where one is inclined to look for nearly a hundred percent of church attendance, especially in the country churches. Although the Amsterdam membership counts up over seven thousand, the writer found only some three hundred worshippers in attendance in the house on the Singel, in the course of a visit one Sunday morning several years ago. Two hundred at the other church in the city that same Sunday brought the entire attendance to about five hundred, a fair average he was told for the year. The Rotterdam church with a nominal membership of over one thousand

11 J. M. Leendertz on his trip through the United States, in 1922, was impressed at the time of his visit to the Alexanderwohl congregation in Kansas, with the similarity of the inner architectural arrangements of the Kansas church to that of many of the old church buildings in Holland. The Alexanderwohl congregation, it will be remembered, several centuries back belonged to the Groningen Society in Holland, and wandered through successive centuries to Prussia, then to Russia, and finally to the prairies of Kansas, carrying with them not only their religious practises, but also their Dutch style of architecture. Most of the members of the present congregation can trace their ancestry directly back to Holland during all these years.

does well, it is said, to draw an average of two hundred to its worship service. This condition prevails throughout the city churches, though in the country the attendance is somewhat better. Membership, too, in many cases is merely nominal. Many keep their names on the membership rolls, and even pay their church dues long after they have ceased to attend services at all.

The Amsterdam Congregation

The Amsterdam congregation is well organized. A card index record is kept of all the members, many of whom of course are not known personally to the four ministers or other church officials, with statistics as to birth, baptism, names of the two sponsors still required of every applicant for baptism and marriage, and such other information as may be of value to the church authorities. The records include over four thousand family names.¹² This number would seem to be entirely out of proportion to the size of the congregation, if it were not for the fact that among the Mennonites in Holland there are many more divided families in the membership than in America. In many cases a husband, wife or child may be the only Mennonite member of the family, while the rest may be scattered among other evangelical churches or none, or may occasionally even be of the Catholic faith. This condition, quite common in Holland, scarcely prevails among Mennonites in other parts of the world, where Mennonite settlements are inclined to be compact, homogeneous and for the most part rural.

Many of the larger congregations possess valuable libraries on the history and the literature of their own faith. The most comprehensive of these is the one in Amsterdam of which there is a printed catalogue. Most

¹² These statistics are of 1926.

of the larger congregations also support their own children's homes, sanitariums, and other charitable and philanthropic institutions for their own people, a practise carried by Dutch Mennonites to Prussia, Russia and later to the western prairies of North America. To take care of their own unfortunate has always been a trait among the Mennonites everywhere deeply rooted in their historical traditions.

Political and Economic Influence

The fact that the Mennonites of the Netherlands live in the cities is the chief reason, no doubt, why they have been much more influential in the intellectual and commercial circles of their own nation than their brethren in other countries. Like the Quakers in England, and like the Jews in America the Mennonites of Holland enjoy an authority far out of proportion to their mere numerical strength, especially in financial and economic, as well as in political matters. In Amsterdam nearly all the banks of the city are likely to have one or more Mennonites on their board of directors, including occasional presidents, among others recently, the late Vissering, the former president of the National Central Bank of the Netherlands. During the past quarter century Mennonites have furnished several Cabinet members, a Governor General of the East Indies, the first president of the World Court, several members of the highest court of justice, and captains of industry, painters, professors, and doctors of the highest rank. Some time ago of the twenty-eight deputies in the popular house of the States General four were Mennonites, while of the twenty-seven in the upper house three were from the same faith. Of one hundred members of the Royal Academy of Sciences eleven were of the Mennonite denomination, a representation far out of proportion to their numbers.

A Few Statistics

In numbers, the Dutch Mennonites have made a steady though rather slow growth during the past three quarters of a century. In 1850 the total Mennonite population, including children, approximated forty thousand, which has grown to about seventy thousand at the present time, scattered through one hundred and thirty congregations. Of these, about forty thousand are now found in the provinces of the two Hollands, about fifteen thousand in Friesland; and the rest scattered about through Groningen, and several other northern provinces. The largest increase has been in the city congregations, due largely to migration from the country churches. Amsterdam now has a total Mennonite population, including children, of some ten thousand. In Haarlem there are according to recent statistics in round numbers about three thousand and five hundred Mennonite souls; in the Hague, three thousand; in Rotterdam^{12a} nearly two thousand; in Groningen seventeen hundred; and in Leeuwarden, a prominent Anabaptist center in Menno's day, about fifteen hundred.

The Gemeentedagbeweging

Although Holland was not directly involved in the world war, the Dutch Mennonites were greatly stirred by that catastrophe; and like their brethren in other parts of the world, they were driven to a more serious consideration of those fundamental principles of their forefathers which they had long since abandoned. A small group of those most concerned about this matter, under the leadership of T. O. Hylkema, pastor at Giethoorn, most of whom had for some time been attending a series of Quaker meetings at Woodbrooke, England, the chief ob-

^{12a} The fine Mennonite church here was completely demolished by the late German bombardment of Rotterdam.

jective of which was to revive among the English Quakers a keener interest in the old time Quaker spirit, just then at ebb tide, met in 1917, at Utrecht for the purpose of starting a similar Woodbrooke movement among the Mennonites, under the name of *Gemeentedag van Doopsgezinden*.

The exact purpose of this new movement was perhaps at first not quite clear, though it was hoped by the sponsors that it might somehow promote a warmer appreciation among both laity and the ministry of the earlier practical piety of traditional Mennonitism, and also deepen the personal spiritual and religious experiences of the brotherhood. As it expanded, however, its aims became more clearly defined. Its activities today are grouped under the heads, called *Arbeidsbroepen*—Bible study, Missions, War Resistance, and Temperance. In each of these fields increased interest has been aroused throughout the whole church by this *Gemeentedagbeweging*. The movement has remained largely undogmatic in spite of the attempts on the part of an evangelical minority to make it otherwise. Practical piety, and a deeper spiritual life are stressed in all its activities. In 1922, a separate youth movement was organized in connection with the parent *Gemeentedag*; and the two have worked in close harmony since.

At first, the meetings of the *Gemeentedag* were held at Utrecht, later for a few years in a more or less public camping ground at Lunteren. In 1925 the first of several open camps was built by voluntary contributions on an open heath at Elspeet, with a fine assembly hall, and a series of barrack like sleeping rooms. These open camps, called "Brotherhouses," have since become the centers of much of the spiritual and recreational life of the more progressive and youthful element of the whole denomination. Regional *Gemeentedag*, or Brotherhood meetings as

they may be called, are also held now in various local churches throughout the Mennonite settlements.

This new movement in the beginning was regarded with considerable suspicion by the official church organizations as represented in the A. D. S., and to this day many of the old leaders are still unreconciled to the introduction of the new life. The recent Mennonite World Congress in 1936 was sponsored almost entirely by the Gemeentedag group, with little support from the official A. D. S. organization and its leaders. Half of the sessions of the Congress, those dealing with such harmless subjects as church history, were held in Amsterdam; the other half, devoted in the main to the more controversial subjects of missions, culture and youth problems, were held at the Elspeet Brotherhouse. Especially bitter has been the opposition on the part of the old guard against the section on War Resistance. In fact a counter movement was launched by the anti-pacifists under the caption of the *Committee Opposing the Propaganda Advocating War Resistance and one sided Disarmament*.

T. O. Hylkema has remained a guiding spirit of the whole Brotherhood movement since its founding, ably assisted, however, by a growing number of the more spiritually minded from both the older and younger religious leaders from all sections of the church, including A. K. Kuiper, venerable retired pastor of the Amsterdam church; J. M. Leendertz of Haarlem, well known among the American Mennonites through his visit here in 1922 in the interests of the Dutch Mennonite mission cause; Frits Kuiper, son of the Amsterdam pastor, and perhaps today the leading spirit among the younger men in the whole movement; A. H. van Drooge, of Deventer; C. Nijdam, S. H. N. Gorter, N. v. d. Zijpp, L. D. J. Knipscheer, J. Yntema, H. Brouwer, J. E. van Brakel, and many others including numerous women. All these men have

been active, too, in the general philanthropic and charitable efforts of the church, particularly recently in the relief of their Russian brethren; and have especially sponsored contacting their fellow Mennonites from other parts of the world. In the Gemeentedag sponsored World Congress mentioned above, they furnished most of the Dutch contingent of speakers for the occasion.¹³

The mission cause, too, which had sunk almost to the vanishing point after the war, was saved through the timely assistance of the Gemeentedag following. Perhaps the most significant and most constructive effort of the whole movement has been the peace division, *Arbeidsgroep van Doopsgezinden tegen den Krijgsdienst*, which endeavors to restore again the earlier traditional Mennonite doctrine of non-resistance. Following the recent World Mennonite Congress, a group of Dutch Mennonites, with several delegates from the United States and Canada, and one from Germany, met at the Brotherhood house at Fredesheim, and organized an *International Peace Committee*, with Dr. J. terMeulen, librarian of the Hague Court library, as executive secretary, and Dr. Harold S. Bender, of the United States, as president. The purpose of this committee is not only to spread the peace doctrine among the Mennonites the world over, but also to render such assistance as may be needed to those conscientious objectors, who, because of their refusal to assume military service, may be imprisoned or otherwise restricted in their religious or personal freedom by their governments. Dr. terMeulen and this committee as well as numerous other Mennonites of the A. D. S., have already rendered valuable assistance to the Hutterite colony in Liechtenstein, Austria, who were driven out of their homes because of their peace doctrines, and have been

¹³ The generous aid given by the Dutch Mennonites to their suffering Russian brethren after the recent war is further discussed in the chapter on Russia.

assisted to a new home in England by the English Quakers.^{13a} The names of the Dutch contingent at the Fredesheim peace meeting deserves notice here—L. G. D. Knipscheer, Frits Kuiper, D. Attema, Jacob terMeulen, H. Brouwer, W. Mesdag, J. C. Dirkmaat, T. O. Hylkema, Jan Gleigsteen, a conscientious objector, who had spent some time in prison because of refusal to render the required military training, and J. M. Leendertz. Hans Zumpe represented the Liechtenstein colony at the meeting.

A Look Ahead

What the future holds in store for the Mennonites in the Netherlands no one can foretell. It would appear at first glance that with the repudiation of non-resistance and so many of the other fundamental Mennonite doctrines on the one hand, and with the separation of church and state now an accomplished fact on the other, there would be little logical excuse for the continuance of a distinctive, struggling Mennonite church; that it would contribute but little to the religious life of the Dutch people that could not be better shared in conjunction with the larger protestant churches. The adoption of the Gemeentedag program, however, and especially the revival once more of the original Mennonite peace principles would give the Dutch Mennonites a task worth striving for, and restore them again to their former place along side the English Quakers, who have never completely forsaken the principles of their founder; and their American brethren, in the great work of relieving the world of its greatest collective sin, and its most fatal illusion—modern war. But whether the new gospel will be able to dominate the whole Mennonite body, and over-

^{13a} These Liechtenstein Hutterites have since left England for new homes in Paraguay.

come their religious indifference and liberal thinking, and at the same time wring from the Dutch government a recognition of the rights of individual conscience in matters of military service is highly problematical. Dutch Mennonitism as a standard bearer for the Prince of Peace may have run its course.¹⁴

¹⁴ This was written before the present War. What effect the recent conquest of Holland by Germany will have on the Dutch Mennonite peace movement is not yet known.

V

AROUND THE SOUTHERN BALTIC

As noted elsewhere the Mennonites, by the middle of the sixteenth century, were restricted to two well defined areas—Switzerland and the Netherlands, to which may be added a third, Moravia, if the Hutterites are included. The present congregations of south Germany and France are all of Swiss origin, while those of north Germany came from the Netherlands largely, though in the course of time a few native Germans and Swiss were added. By this time the fervid missionary zeal which had characterized the earlier spread of Anabaptism had been almost entirely stamped out by relentless persecution. Mennonites no longer had the heart to look for new recruits, only too glad to escape with their own lives, and thankful if they might hold their own. The growth of Mennonitism after this was rather the swarming of a people than the expansion of a faith.

In north Germany, along the Baltic and the North Sea, the Dutch Mennonite refugees, fleeing from the atrocities of Spanish rule, located in two well defined areas—just across the Dutch border in northwestern Germany; and farther east along the Baltic in the delta of the Vistula and nearby coast line. It will be the province of this chapter to describe the eastward expansion of these Dutch refugees.

NORTHWEST GERMANY

The settlements in northwest Germany may be roughly classed into three groups—East Friesland, the Lower Elbe, and the Lower German Rhine.

East Friesland

The independent little county of East Friesland, directly across the Dutch border in the extreme north-west corner of Germany, was just outside the immediate control of Charles the Fifth as tyrant of the Netherlands, and far enough removed from his Hapsburg capitol as emperor of the Germans, to assume somewhat of an independent attitude toward the great religious questions then agitating central Europe. Quite early, the local counts had turned favorably toward the Reformation movement, but for a time they remained undecided which of the parties, Lutheran or Reformed, to follow. To Johan Laski, a Polish nobleman, was committed the task of working out a satisfactory religious system for the East Frieslanders. In the end, Laski decided largely for the Reformed establishment.

During this transition period the local rulers assumed a somewhat tolerant attitude toward religious dissent; and East Friesland became a rallying place for religious refugees from neighboring lands, including Anabaptists from Holland. Not that the first Anabaptists here were all refugees. In fact Anabaptism likely had an indigenous growth in the county. Melchior Hoffman's activities in and about Emden have already been noted, and those of his disciples—Jan Trijpmaker, who first planted the banner of the new movement in Amsterdam the same year, and in the next forfeited his life for the cause at the Hague; and Sikke Freerks, whose execution a few years later at Leeuwarden, started Menno Simons on his career as a reformer.

Menno himself, as already noted, went in and out from Emden for many years, as did his co-workers, Dirk Philips, and the latter's brother, Obbe, as well as Leonard Bouwens and other early leaders. Here, too, were held many important conferences during the century, and

Anabaptist meetings of all sorts, including the great debate with the clergy of the Reformed establishment in 1578.

With the end of persecution in the Netherlands, near the close of the sixteenth century, Mennonite migration to East Friesland ceased. The settlements here from this time on remained few and small. By 1700 the congregation in and about *Aurich*, the official residence of the ruling counts, had died out, and only three centers remained—*Emden*, *Leer*, and *Norden*. The total membership of all three never exceeded several hundred.

While few, if any Mennonites, were ever put to death in East Friesland because of their faith, nevertheless they were never granted more than a limited toleration. They always remained subject to the whims and prejudices of arbitrary rulers. Some counts were worse than others. Frequently throughout the sixteenth century, urged by neighboring Dutch regents to break up refugee settlements, or by Hapsburg emperors to enforce the Edict of Speier of 1529, or by the local clergy to root out all religious dissent, obliging East Friesland counts occasionally ordered Mennonites out of the county with bag and baggage. But these orders seemingly were never taken seriously by the latter, and seldom carried out by the former.

In 1544 Countess Anna, although one of the most liberal of the early rulers, upon the request of Maria, regent of the Netherlands at the time, issued an order for the expulsion of all Anabaptists within her jurisdiction. But, advised by Johan Laski to differentiate between the more or less fanatical sects that still infested her lands, the Batenburgers, Davidians and Münsterites on the one hand, and the followers of the peaceful Menno on the other, she limited her order to the former only. Referring to these latter, the Countess made use of the

term *Menist*, the name by which this group is generally known after this. Menno, however, thought it best to leave. He spent the next two years in the archbishopric of Cologne.

And so, toleration remained but a relative term. Mennonites, even under the most liberal regime, were forced to worship in secret. Even after church buildings were permitted, they had to be erected along back streets, and in out of the way places without tower or bell. This latter provision, however, seemingly was not much of a hardship; for on one occasion, at least, the Reformed clergy of Norden complained to the magistrate that "the impudent Mennonites go to church to the sound of our own bells."

The toleration act of 1627, granted by the liberal Count Rudolf Christian, guaranteed the Mennonites only the legal rights of worship and warned them especially against luring any of the faithful from the true church with "honeyed words." For this privilege each family was to pay the governing authorities the annual sum of six reichstaler. Marriage could be performed only by the regular clergy; the full rights of citizenship were still withheld; freedom from military service and from the oath always remained a subject for further negotiation, and was usually transmuted to a money payment.

Even as late as the more liberal charter granted by Carel Edzard in 1738, worship still had to be carried on without open display and without propaganda. Mennonites by this time, however, might be married by their own ministers and according to their own customs; but the regular Reformed pastor was still entitled to his fee of one-half reichstaler, nevertheless, partly as a gift, but largely, no doubt, to insure the continuation of their privileges; and a record of the marriage must be kept in the church register. The ministers from the outside were

granted the right of visit. Military exception was conceded without the payment of the usual exemption money.

In 1744, East Friesland came under the jurisdiction of the king of Prussia, at which time the combined Mennonite churches paid the new ruler one thousand reichstaler. After this the Mennonites here, with a few exceptions, enjoyed the liberties, and shared the restrictions common to their brethren throughout the kingdom of Prussia. During, and after the Napoleonic wars, East Friesland came under the control successively of Holland, Hanover and finally Prussia again.

Of the three congregations in East Friesland today, Leer, Norden, and Emden,¹ the last is perhaps the most important, and the oldest. In fact it is the oldest existing Mennonite congregation in the world, having had a continued existence since 1530. The congregation has never been large. The present modest little meeting house built on a back street in 1796, and seating less than one hundred people has been adequate during all these years for the needs of the Mennonite community.

Small as the Emden group has been, however, it has given both the church and the state a long list of prominent men. In addition to the many above mentioned church leaders who served the congregation in the sixteenth century there should be added in more recent times men and women who were prominent in affairs of both church and state—the Brons family—Anna, author of the first comprehensive history of the Mennonites in the German language, now passed through its third edition; Isaac Brons, her husband, deputy to the Frankfort Parliament in 1848, president of the East Fries-

1 A small church was organized in Gronau, in Westphalia in 1887. Among the leaders of this congregation have been the van Delden family, including today Dr. Henrich van Delden, president of one of the largest cotton mills in modern Germany.

land Navy League in 1861, and member of the Reichstag of the North German Confederation in 1867; and their son Bernard, leading citizen of Emden, chief magistrate for fourteen years, Swedish consul at one time for that sea port, and last but by no means least, for thirty years deacon in his home church. From the same congregation, too, there came during the late war a major general of the army, and an admiral of the navy; ample evidence that the Emden Mennonites have wandered far from the teachings of their founder on the subject of peace.

The Lower Elbe.

Dutch Mennonite refugees also found their way throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century to the free cities and the isolated country places along the river deltas and sea coasts of Schleswig-Holstein. The principal settlements here were along the lower Elbe, between Hamburg and Lübeck, down the Elbe from here, and up the coast as far as the marsh lands of the lower Eider. Coming as they did directly from Holland, where they had long known the technique of ditch digging and dike building, they felt at home among the swamps of this region. They soon built up productive farms where there had been nothing but waste before, and brought prosperity to cities by their thrift in industry, and skill in commerce; and by so doing earned the gratitude and the protection of their benefactors. Many of the Mennonites were weavers; others were fishermen; all loved the sea; some became merchant princes in course of time, wealthy and influential.

Among the earliest of the Mennonite communities here was the one established in the marsh lands of the lower Eider, in the southwestern corner of Schleswig and the northwestern border of Holstein. Here at first they were hardly tolerated, but by the beginning of the

seventeenth century were granted more liberal privileges of worship, and the right to make their living by farming in the open country, and by trade and commerce in the cities, in spite of the efforts of the Lutheran clergy to annihilate them. The generous terms granted the Mennonites in Friedrichstadt a little later were also applied to the settlements along the lower Eider. In fact these various small scattered communities in the open country never organized congregations of their own, but remained an organic part of the Friedrichstadt church. Propaganda of course was not allowed. Nor were they inclined to make inroads into the state church. The only accessions to Mennonitism from the outside were occasional servants who joined the church of their employers, no doubt, usually of their own volition without any persuasion from their masters and mistresses. But even these humble recruits were often made the occasion of serious attempts on the part of the Lutheran clergy to curtail the privileges of the Mennonites.

By the middle of the nineteenth century there were no Mennonites left in the open country of the Eider lowlands. That they survived so long is an eloquent tribute to the tenacity and genuineness of their religious convictions. At best it would seem almost an impossibility for a widely scattered and isolated people, speaking a foreign tongue, and practising a proscribed religion, the object of the jealousies of a powerful state church, to maintain and perpetuate their own religious institutions. But the Mennonites here held their own for over two centuries. Among the causes given by the writers of their own history for their final dissolution as an organized religious group are the education of their children in Lutheran schools, mixed marriages, the children of which according to the law of 1751 must be regarded as members of the state church, and the loss by the close of the

eighteenth century of many of the simple and pious Christian virtues of their early forefathers, to which should be added also the mistake of continuing their worship in a foreign tongue long after it had ceased to be the language of everyday life among the younger generation.

The congregation in *Friedrichstadt*, a little farther up the river, still exists. The city of *Friedrichstadt* was founded in the beginning of the seventeenth century with the consent of the reigning duke by a group of tolerant Remonstrants. In 1623 Mennonites, too, were granted full religious toleration, including a recognition of their scruples against the oath, military service and police duty. Perhaps nowhere else in all Germany at that time did Mennonites enjoy such religious rights as here, although their status was still merely that of a tolerated people without any inherent civil or religious rights. Their privileges however, did not include the right of expansion at the expense of the prevailing established church. When the king of Denmark fell heir to the duchy of Holstein, he confirmed all these privileges. The Mennonites here always played an important role in the commercial and industrial life of the city, although they never, even in the later years, took an active part in political matters with the exception of an occasional election to the city council or the office of burgomaster.

The *Friedrichstadt* church was never large. It reached its greatest prosperity about 1700 when it numbered about four hundred members; one hundred years later, as a result of marriage restrictions encouraged by the Lutheran church, the scattered membership in the open country about the town and the insistence upon the use of the Dutch language in a German environment, this number had dwindled to less than fifty, which is about the present membership. It was from the pastorate of

this church that C. J. van der Smissen, the first theological professor, and later the principal of the Wadsworth school, was called to his American field of labor in 1868.

On the right bank of the Elbe, between Hamburg and the sea lies *Glueckstadt*, once the seat of a prosperous Mennonite congregation. This town was founded in 1616 by Christian IV of Denmark, who, desirous of attracting thrifty settlers to the new city, offered complete religious liberty to various oppressed sects of the surrounding countries, with many other special privileges, freedom of worship, the right to carry on trade and commerce, and exemption from military service; but for the latter an annual tribute had to be substituted. Mennonites came here almost from the first.

Among the prominent business men of this city was Guysbert van der Smissen, founder of the well-known Mennonite family of van der Smissens in northwestern Germany, who had come to *Glueckstadt* in 1643, but later left for Altona. Guysbert was a merchant prince in his day, and was responsible for making his city one of the most important sea ports along the entire coast. His ships found their way to all the ports of north and south Europe, and Greenland, where he engaged extensively in the whale fisheries. When van der Smissen left for Altona, and took his business with him, the Mennonite congregation here began to decline. By 1740 the last Mennonite family in *Glueckstadt* had disappeared.

In the Hamburg-Lübeck region, Anabaptists of the Mennonite type were found soon after the middle of the sixteenth century. One of the earliest of the refugees here was Cord Roosen, founder of a long line of influential Mennonites who had come originally from the duchy of Julich. He located near Lübeck; others followed him from the same duchy and from Cologne and Holland, as well as from other intolerant lands of the northwest.

By 1543 or earlier, as noted elsewhere, a small colony had founded a Mennonite village called *Wuestenfeld* on an estate called *Fresenburg*, the possession of Count Bartholomaeus von Ahlefeld, not far from the present town of Oldesloe. In this village it will be remembered Menno himself found his final resting place, and here he lies buried in what was supposed to be his own garden. The settlement was completely destroyed in 1627 when the armies of Tilly and Wallenstein raided northern Germany in the course of the Thirty Years War. Most of the members then left for Lübeck and Altona, but a few remained a while longer in *Fresenburg*. The last recorded mention of this community, in 1656, indicates that at that time there were only three members left.

Before the close of the sixteenth century a congregation had also been formed in the free city of Hamburg, and in the neighboring village of *Altona*, the latter under the political jurisdiction at the time of the counts of *Schauenberg*, vassals to the duke of *Holstein*. Refugees came here principally from *Holland*, *Cologne*, and the duchy of *Julich*. At first little toleration was accorded to Anabaptists of any variety, and orders were sent out to the faithful not to harbor them nor to rent them houses nor lands. But by the seventeenth century the ruling authorities had become a bit more lenient, although the usual restrictions against publicity, and propaganda were still in force, and in *Altona* an annual tax of one reichstaler per head was collected. Somewhat later these privileges were extended, and confirmed by the king of *Denmark* when he assumed the title of duke of *Holstein* in 1741. When in 1672 emperor *Leopold* reminded the authorities of the free city of *Hamburg* that the Mennonites were not one of the three tolerated religions, the Senate defended them, replying that they were a peaceful, industrious and useful people, and not at all to be

confused with the fanatical Münsterites against whom the imperial edicts had originally been directed. As elsewhere, so here also, however, the Lutheran clergy were entirely out of sympathy with the liberal policy of the magistrates. As late as 1764, the former secured the passage of a regulation forbidding intermarriage between Mennonites and Lutherans.

In course of time the Hamburg-Altona Mennonites became prosperous, and many of them wealthy, being engaged largely in commercial enterprises, and the whale fisheries. When in 1674 they proposed to erect a new church, it was agreed among the wealthier merchants that they would each contribute five percent of the net proceeds of the season's catch in the northern waters toward this purpose. Tradition says that the season's return was unusually large and more than enough to meet the demands of the new building. In 1713, when, in the course of the Swedish war, the city was destroyed by fire, the losses of Heinrich van der Smissen, one of the well to do members, was two breweries and eighteen houses.

The two settlements in Hamburg and Altona formed one community, but all the divisions present in Holland were transplanted here, Frisian, Flemish and High German, to which were added a little later, several others. In course of time these were united into one congregation, on the basis of the conservative Olive Branch confession of faith. The united congregation, which for a long time remained in close touch with the parent communities in Holland, was classed with the Dutch "Sonnist" faction. The present meeting house of the congregation is in Altona. When in 1678 the celebrated minister Galenus Abrahams de Haan of Amsterdam, founder of the "Lammist" faction in Holland visited the Hamburg-Altona church hoping to preach there, the

local congregation decided to test his orthodoxy before permitting him to preach. He passed the examination to the satisfaction of the church council on such questions as the necessity of water baptism, the admission of the truly converted only to the communion table, the equality of the Son with the Father, and the need of a written confession of faith. Galenus was given permission to preach, but was warned not to advocate any practises contrary to those of the Altona-Hamburg congregation, among others that of observing silent prayer. The local minister at the time was Gerhard Roosen.

Gerhard, or Gerrit, as he is frequently called, is the best known of a long line of distinguished members of the Roosen family. Cord, the founder of the Holstein branch has already been mentioned. Paul the father of Gerhard came to Altona from Fresenburg in 1611. The last of a long line of preachers was Berend Carl, who, in 1904, ended a sixty year pastorate of the Altona church. Gerhard, who was born in Hamburg in 1612, was a wealthy ship owner as well as a preacher, and served his congregation for sixty-two years without pay, as was the custom at that time, during a critical period in the history of the local church. Among other troublesome occasions through which he safely directed his people was an episode in 1648, when a group of applicants for membership, due to some outside influence, some say that of an English Baptist, demanded to be baptized by immersion, at the same time also advocating other innovations, including footwashing before communion, and the observance of the Lord's Supper in the evening with unleavened bread. In spite of Roosen's tactful handling of the situation, a division could not be averted. A small group seceded and organized an immersionist, or *dompelaar* branch of the church which lasted for over one hundred years.

Roosen was also the author of several books, one of which, a sort of catechism, first printed in 1702, and issued frequently afterward, was widely used for over two centuries among the Mennonites of both south Germany and America. He travelled extensively in Europe, and carried on a voluminous correspondence with his Mennonite brethren on both sides of the Atlantic. It was to him that the Germantown Mennonites wrote for advice with reference to the installation of the first minister for the American church. He died an accidental death in 1711, having lived just four months less than a full century.

Jacob Denner, the last of the "dompelaar" preachers, who died in 1746, was another man of unusual influence. He was first a minister in the Hamburg-Altona congregation, but later joined the immersionists. He was an eloquent preacher, and his sermons were largely attended by even the nobility and other men of influence. It is said that the Crown Prince of Sweden on the occasions of his visits to Hamburg often heard him. Denner was an extensive traveller, a deep student of the sciences, a school teacher, as well as a preacher. He, too, was a *liefdepreeker*, for preaching was a side issue with him. His real vocation was that of dyer.

Denner also wrote a number of books including a book of sermons first published in the Dutch in 1707; then translated into German in 1730; and reprinted several times since, including the Frankental edition of 1792 published especially by two Pennsylvanians for the Pennsylvania church. The book was widely read by Mennonites until well into the nineteenth century.

Another prominent Hamburg family was that of van der Smissen, several of whose members have already been mentioned—Guysbert, the founder of the Holstein branch who left Friedrichstadt for Glueckstadt in 1643,

and the latter place for Altona in 1682; Heinrich, the Hamburg merchant of a later period; and Carl Justus, of Friedrichstadt. There remains Heinrich, for many years, including the trying period of the late war, the editor of the *Mennonitische Blaetter*, and late pastor of the Altona congregation.

The membership of this congregation has not increased in late years. In 1700 it consisted of approximately seven hundred, now less than four hundred; but only a handful attend services. In 1914 a fine new plant was erected including a commodious church building, social hall, and parsonage. The late World War, however, seemingly dampened the enthusiasm of the builders, and dissipated some of their invested funds. The equipment has not been utilized since to its fullest capacity. Perhaps the new minister, Otto Schowalter, a young man, may revive the waning enthusiasm and religious zeal of the declining congregation.

The Lower German Rhine.

Mennonites were found along the lower Rhine in the duchies of Julich, Cleve, and Berg, the archbishopric of Cologne, and the other small principalities in this area all through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The more or less fanatical Anabaptist sects, also, Batenburgers, Davidians, and a few Münsterites, lingered on for a time after the fall of Münster, though by the middle of the sixteenth century these had nearly run their course.

In all these lower Rhine areas, and during all this time the Mennonites enjoyed much less of religious toleration than did those of the two regions above described. Here they were everywhere outlawed. Some rulers were less cruel than others; and Mennonite liberties varied with the times. Catholics were usually more bitter against them than the Lutherans, and the latter more so than the Reformed.

It was during the time, it will be remembered, when Herman von Wied, elector of Cologne, attempted to transform the Catholic archbishopric into a Lutheran principality, that Menno Simons found a brief respite here from his wanderings. But with the return of the Catholics to power, persecution again set in and Mennonitism completely disappeared from the archbishopric.

Among the conspicuous victims of the executioner's axe at Cologne was Thomas von Imbroich, a young printer of twenty-five, who gave his life for his faith in 1558. While in the agonies of torture, inflicted by his accusers for the purpose of forcing him to recant, he was encouraged by his wife who was a witness of his suffering, to remain steadfast. Refusing to recant, he was beheaded. The Martyrs Mirror, in an extended account of the trial and execution of this man of heroic mould says that "the Count would gladly have set him free, but he feared the imperial decree and the displeasure of the Bishop." Von Imbroich was an extensive writer. One of his devotional tracts is still printed in the American edition of the *Ausbund*, and for that reason still read by the Amish who use the hymnal. In 1565 fifty-six members of this same congregation were apprehended with their minister, Matthias Servaes, who was also executed. A decree issued by the ruling authorities in 1578 making Mennonitism a capital offence practically annihilated the church in this region.

Among the other congregations along the lower Rhine which survived the early impacts of persecution was the one at *Gladbach*, founded sometime before the middle of the sixteenth century, and by 1650 still numbering some five hundred souls. Many of the members here were prominent in the industrial and commercial circles of the city. Persistent persecution, however, on the part of intolerant dukes finally completely scattered

the church. Some went to Nimwegen, others to Crefeld. By 1720 the congregation had practically disappeared.

The *Goch* church was almost as old as the Mennonite movement itself. In 1547, it will be remembered, it was the scene of the conference at which Menno Simons, Dirk Philips and other leaders tried Adam Pastor for antitrinitarianism. The congregation was small, but remained intact almost up to the close of the nineteenth century.

Emmerich, too, on the right bank of the Rhine just a few miles from the Dutch border was the seat of an early congregation dating back to 1534. Tradition has it that when in 1672 the city fell into the hands of the French, Louis XIV, bent on making good Catholics out of his thrifty Mennonite subjects in this region sent a learned theologian from the Sorbonne to instruct them in the ways of the true faith; but when the King found that the uneducated Mennonite preachers were better versed in the Scriptures than his learned theologians, he gave up the effort as hopeless. In 1740 the congregation consisted of two hundred souls, but it has steadily declined since. The last preacher retired in 1883, after which the small group was served by visiting ministers. By 1912 there were still twelve members here, but without any organized church activities.

The church at *Aachen*, ancient capital of Charlemagne and later rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, and afterwards an imperial city, was founded in 1559 by a group of Dutch refugees. The well-known Hans de Ries lived here for a time. Up to the close of the century the Mennonites were frequently ordered into exile, but were permitted to remain on payment of large sums of ransom money. In 1614 more drastic measures were tried, and the six hundred members then in residence began to trek to more tolerant lands. A few of the more adventurous

spirits dared to remain. But the congregation gradually dwindled until by 1800 none were left.

The *Neuwied* community goes back to the liberal rule of Frederick III of Wied when a number of Mennonites settled here from the Upper Rhine country. The congregation still exists with a membership of about half a hundred.

Physical punishment as a means of bringing about religious conformity did not last much beyond the sixteenth century along the lower Rhine. A more profitable method for compulsion had been discovered by this time by the thrifty rulers of these regions, a method quite generally used against the Jews also—that of extortion. Toleration could be bought with a price. That this was still true as late as the close of the seventeenth century is shown by the experience of a colony living in the barony of *Rheydt*. This little barony not far from the city of Crefeld, was at that time the possession of the bigoted Catholic elector of the Palatinate, Count Johan Wilhelm, who was especially bitter against the Mennonites in his territory, and had been levying a specie of blackmail against them for some time.

Influenced by the fanatical monks and greedy local officials of the surrounding territory, the Count gave his consent to a raid upon a small Mennonite community located here. Suddenly one July morning in the year 1694, while the peaceful community was quietly pursuing its usual routine of daily activities, largely that of spinning and weaving, a mob of armed peasants, led by the baron himself, and several Roman priests, and "Captain of Horse," clothed with authority from the count, suddenly appeared among the unsuspecting villagers, broke into their homes, hastily gathered together such as could not escape, about forty in number, and drove them like cattle—men, women and children—bound and hand-

cuffed, to a nearby castle where they were imprisoned for a time in a vile dungeon. A certain theological doctor speaking for the priests stated the case against these peaceful weavers, namely that they belonged to an

Accursed and damnable faith, that they must renounce it and accept the Catholic religion, or they would all die because they had undoubtedly lived and sojourned a long while under authority of his Electoral Princely Grace of the Palatinate, and as this had now occurred for the first time to his Electoral Princely Grace it was therefore purposed by him to weed out such a damned sect if they would not change their faith.

After some weeks in filthy prisons, and after the loss of much of their property, during which the ecclesiastical authorities tried by various threats and several executions to obtain a recantation of their faith, most of the group, thanks to the intervention in their behalf of William III, the king of England, who had known the Dutch Mennonites well before his accession to the English throne, were given their freedom upon the promise of paying a fine of eight thousand reichstaler, which they were compelled to collect from their brethren in Holland and elsewhere. After their release they were conducted to the frontier and banished with the threat of forfeiture of life and property in case they returned. Most of them found their way to Crefeld.

The most influential, and historically the most important of all the Mennonite congregations of this region, and today almost the sole survivor, is the one at Crefeld.

Crefeld, now a flourishing industrial city along the lower Rhine, a great silk and textile center, the third largest in Europe, was fortunate during the entire seventeenth century, the century of so much religious intolerance in all the surrounding territory, to be located in the County of Moers, which was the possession of the tolerant House of Orange. The city enjoyed great re-

ligious freedom therefore, and became a refuge for the persecuted sects of the surrounding lands.

A Mennonite church had been established here as early as 1600 if not before. One of the first Mennonites known in the city was a Herman op den Graff, whose name appears as the Crefeld representative to the Dordrecht meeting of 1632 which drew up the well known Dordrecht confession of faith, and whose grandsons were among the founders of Germantown in America. The congregation grew continuously throughout the century by the addition of refugees from the surrounding territory, including the group from Rheydt just mentioned.

Of course toleration here, too, was only relative. While the liberal Orange counts seemingly had no prejudices against religious dissenters, the established church did. It was not until 1657 that the Mennonites were granted full rights of open worship, and even then they had to gather at their meeting place on Koenigstrasse quietly one hour after the meeting time for the Reformed church so as in no way to interfere with the prerogatives of the established institution. In 1679 they were granted the right of citizenship, of which twenty-nine families immediately took advantage. The first meeting house was erected in 1695 on an inconspicuous back street, at that time the city limits, and hidden from public view; and there it stands today, built out to the public street looking very much like an ordinary business block. No one passing by would suspect that hidden within these innocent walls one would find a place of worship.

In 1702 Crefeld came under the jurisdiction of the first king of Prussia, whose successor, Frederick William I, granted the Mennonites certain privileges, including freedom from military service upon the payment of exemption money to the amount of five hundred thaler. The Reformed clergy, considering these privileges too liberal,

laid their complaints before the king, who replied "The Mennonites should not be persecuted, but should be tolerated both for reasons of state and on religious grounds since they are good Christians living peaceably according to the rules of their faith."

The unusual privileges enjoyed by the Crefeld Mennonites were due no doubt not only to the tolerant spirit of the Orange family, but quite as much to the conspicuous role played by many of the former in the industrial growth and civic enterprises of the city. Mennonites have been intimately connected with the inner industrial and economic life of Crefeld for nearly three centuries. In fact it was a Mennonite family—the von der Leyens, Adolf and Heinrich, coming originally as refugees from the duchy of Berg in 1665, who founded the silk and textile business for which Crefeld has been noted ever since. The institution started at that time, and which has been managed from the beginning by descendants of the founders, still employs from four to five thousand laborers; and its products are known the world over.

The von der Leyens have always been among Crefeld's most distinguished citizens—captains of industry, burgomasters, civic leaders. One was knighted by the king of Prussia, and the present *Rathaus* was once his castle. Most of them remained true to their Mennonite connections. But the family name is now extinct. During the World War a General von der Leyen fell in battle; and the last member of the Crefeld branch to bear the name, a rich coffee planter of Brazil, died a few years ago.

Among other prominent Mennonite names must be added that of the de Grief family, one of whom, Cornelius was honored by the city in 1865 by the erection of a statue to his honor because of liberal contributions to the charitable institutions of the city. Also to be mentioned is the Mueller family, originally from the Palati-

nate, one of whose representatives, Hans Mueller, is today the manager of a large and prosperous knitting mill.

Not to be omitted from this list of prominent men are the von Beckeraths, of whom Herman, born in 1801, was the most distinguished member. As a deputy to the Prussian Landtag in 1847 his voice was effectively heard in behalf of religious toleration, although he was no longer in sympathy with the demand for military exemption. In the following year he represented his city in the Frankfort Parliament. For a short time he served the Prussian government as minister of Finance, and later became recognized as the leader of the Liberal party in Prussia. The Beckeraths are still among the influential members of the Crefeld congregation.

The Crefeld Mennonites, as a whole, still play a leading role in the financial and industrial affairs of the city. The best proof of this statement is their political status. Under the Prussian constitution, before the late war, it will be remembered, voting rights were based on tax paying ability. The small group of the wealthy citizens paying one-third of the taxes was entitled to elect one-third of the entire membership of the Landtag; the group, much larger than the first, paying the next third of the taxes was entitled to an equal representation; while the great mass of the population paying the lowest third of the taxes was entitled to the final third of the representation. The Mennonites were almost invariably found in the upper group; the other Protestants in the second; and the Catholics in the great mass of the population.²

In spite of their high standing in financial and business circles, however, the Mennonites retained to a remarkable degree the ideals of simplicity and practise of

2 This was written before the advent of Hitler.

industry which have been a cherished tradition among the Mennonites all over Europe for nearly four hundred years. Many years ago one of the wealthy von der Leyens objected to the introduction of a pulpit into their church on the ground that it savored too much of Catholicism.

Life in Crefeld Two Hundred Years Ago.

An employee of the big silk mills back in 1760, himself not a Mennonite, though the husband of a Mennonite wife, and not in sympathy with the rigid and austere religious practices of the day, has left an interesting picture of the religious practises among the Crefeld Mennonites of that time. They had no organs in their churches then, he said, nor did they have specially trained ministers. They were exceptionally generous and hospitable, helping every worthy cause both within and without their own congregations; they were frugal, industrious, and frowned upon all unnecessary luxuries. Their clothes were simple, usually of a somber color, and of a prescribed form. Shoestrings were prescribed instead of buckles; but the young people, this writer suggests, often broke away from these restrictions. The young men even dared to wear their hair in round curls, and to substitute the forbidden and worldly buckle for the old fashioned shoe string, and blue coats instead of black, according to the prevailing fashions; but trousers and vests still had to be black.

The young women, too, began to insist on greater liberty to follow the fashions of the world. Their bonnets assumed more elaborate styles, and were more highly decorated with gay ribbons. Their dresses were of livelier colors and gayer patterns than formerly. These were for work day wear however; on Sundays they still had to appear in brown or black. Finger rings and similar ornamental jewelry were still strictly forbidden.

This was in 1760; by the close of the century most of the old restrictions had been discarded, and a salaried and educated ministry had been inaugurated. Today there are no restrictions on religious practises in the Crefeld church, and few on religious beliefs. The Mennonites here have followed largely the liberal doctrines of their Dutch brethren across the boundary line. The church is still one of the largest in western Germany, numbering something less than eight hundred members.³ It was from Crefeld and its environs, it will be remembered, that the first Mennonite immigrants came to America.

Relation to Dutch Mennonites

It will thus be seen that all these Mennonite congregations of northwestern Germany remained in close cultural and spiritual relation with their Dutch brethren almost up to the present. The language of the pulpit remained Dutch until far into the nineteenth century. German was not fully introduced into religious worship in Emden until 1889; in Hamburg and Crefeld somewhat earlier. Dutch preachers, too, trained in the Amsterdam Seminary, served the churches almost as long. The religious literature, whether written by their own pastors, or imported from Holland was of Menno Simons' native tongue. It is not strange, therefore, that the Men-

³ See *Mennonitisches Lexicon*. Article, *Krefeld* p. 565.

"During the war (1914-1918) the church supported a kitchen which during the entire period fed a large number of Catholic and Evangelical school children. During the period of inflation, the church lost its investments and many members were impoverished. But many of the hardships were overcome. The orphan home for lack of applicants was changed into an Old People's Home. The local membership was greatly reduced through war losses, outside marriages, striking from the list many nominal members, emigration and the decrease of the birth rate. The membership today (1934) is 760."—Dr. K. Rembert.

nonites here should in general follow the religious beliefs and practises of their brethren in Holland. In the matter of non-resistance, however, as a rule of life they clung to the doctrine and its practise a little more tenaciously and a bit longer than did the Dutch. Back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the big merchants of Hamburg and other congregations along the sea coast had occasion to make a more practical application of this doctrine than did Mennonites in other regions where military exemption could be secured by the payment of a certain sum of money. Ships owned by Mennonites, contrary to the general practise of the times, carried no guns. A violation of this rule made the owner subject to church discipline—usually excommunication.

Opposition, to war service, however, weakened rapidly during the exciting times of the Napoleonic period. Although the church elders kept up a running protest through the entire first half of the nineteenth century against the various attempts of the ruling authorities to establish universal service without exemptions, the number of the laity, especially among the younger men, to whom the maintenance of the old traditions became a matter of indifference, was constantly growing. When universal service was introduced throughout the North German Confederation in 1867 no serious attempt was made by the Mennonities of this region to secure special exemption in their behalf. The doctrine of non-resistance had become a dead letter.

Of the essentials of early Mennonitism only two have been retained—rejection of the oath, and the practise of adult baptism, both fundamental symbols of a free church; to which may be added also in every day life a commendable emphasis still on the virtues of the simple life.

THE VISTULA DELTA

Dutch refugees were also the earliest Anabaptists of the Mennonite type to locate in the region of the Vistula delta, and the Baltic coast to the east in the two Prussias, settling on lay and ecclesiastical estates near *Danzig*, *Elbing*, and *Koenigsberg* before the middle of the sixteenth century. Dutch Anabaptists of other varieties had located here before, but these latter could hardly be classed as Mennonites.

Here, too, their expert knowledge of dikes and dams served them well, and secured for them the favor of well satisfied land lords, both Catholic and Lutheran, in spite of religious heresies. Just when the first came and how many is not known for a certainty; but by 1549 they must have been organized into several church congregations, for in that year Menno Simons, who had labored among them for three years, writing from Wismar, addressed them as "the churches in Prussia." Menno was followed by his friend and fellow worker Dirk Philips as a leader among the churches here, who remained in the neighborhood of Danzig until his departure for Emden in 1568.

In 1562, two noblemen, Simon and Hans von Loysen, the owners of large uncultivated estates in the lower delta at Tiegenhof, water-soaked and overgrown with brush, sent the Dutch Mennonites a special invitation to settle upon their waste lands. Here the latter were promised the rights of religious worship by the Polish king, and attractive rental terms by their landlords. At first they were granted long term leases, from twenty to forty years, on easy terms which were renewed from time to time by successive owners until the Mennonites finally came into complete possession of the lands the first settlers had reclaimed. The settlements spread gradually across the swamp lands of the wide Vistula

and Nogat deltas, and up the river until by the close of the century, in addition to those above mentioned, prosperous communities, and flourishing congregations had been established in the region of Marienburg, Schwetz, Graudenz, Culm and as far as Thorn. By 1608 the bishop of Culm complained that the whole delta was overrun by Mennonites.

While the colonists near the coast were mostly of Dutch extraction and perhaps from East Friesland, those farther inland near Culm contained a considerable sprinkling of south German and Moravian refugees. In 1711 a small group of Swiss exiles located near Tilsit upon the urgent invitation of king Frederick of Prussia. Before the close of the eighteenth century emigrants from Culm and Thorn had also penetrated up the river into Poland in the general direction of Warsaw where several congregations were established. The earliest colonies were confined for a number of years to the country districts; for foreigners, and especially Mennonite foreigners, although welcomed to unproductive swamps and pest infected wastes, were not wanted in the cities.⁴ Some must have found their way into them, unbidden, however.

Religious Liberties Curtailed

In 1555 the citizens of Elbing complained that the Dutch Mennonite laborers were taking the bread out of the mouths of the natives, whereupon the king ordered the former to leave the city; but they did not have to travel far. The large landowners in the nearby Ellerwald

4 It was quite a general practice during these times for rulers of different countries of Middle Europe, desirous of a large and industrious population, especially after a time of pestilence or near devastation, to offer special inducements to prospective desirable settlers. It is said that during the reign of Frederick William III, of Prussia, some three hundred thousand foreigners were located within this territory by special arrangements. Mennonites were not the only people offered these special inducements.

offered them a welcome refuge upon their large estates. Mennonite industry, however, finally won out. In 1585 the same city invited two Mennonite silk merchants, Jost van Kampel and Hans von Koeln, to open a silk shop in the city, and even granted them full rights of citizenship. In Danzig, likewise, Mennonites were barred for a time. In 1552 the Polish king, Sigismund August, declared that only Catholics and Lutherans were to be tolerated within the city walls.

Although the Mennonites of this region with a few exceptions had a common origin, and shared a common cultural history, yet living as they did under four different and separate political divisions, their experiences in the enjoyment of religious and civil liberty were not all identical. The delta congregations were under the rule of the Catholic king of Poland; those about Koenigsberg and Tilsit under the Lutheran duke and later king of Prussia; Danzig was a Lutheran imperial city, and nominally under Polish domination, yet as a free city, enjoyed a great deal of local autonomy to deal with its own problems as it pleased; Elbing, too, as a former Hanseatic town enjoyed more liberty than did the smaller settlements in the open country. By the close of the eighteenth century, however, all these separate divisions had been united under the king of Prussia. Under the feudal system of landholding which still prevailed here, the local noblemen most of whom in the lower Vistula were of Catholic persuasion also enjoyed more or less of local control over their large estates. This division of political authority accounts for the fact that frequently king, city, feudal lord, Lutheran and Catholic often held conflicting views regarding the policy to be adopted toward the Mennonites, and issued contradictory orders against them, each according to his own interests. In the confusion Mennonites sometimes benefitted.

Not that the latter ever enjoyed equal civil or religious privileges with those of the state churches. Toleration, at first, did not extend beyond the right of worship. Anything that might promote the growth of Mennonitism beyond their own immediate circle was strictly prohibited. There was to be no propaganda. Worship must be carried on quietly, without attracting public notice, and in private homes only. Meeting houses were not allowed until the close of the sixteenth century, and even then they had to be held as private property in the name of some private individual. Public burials, too, were tabooed. Occasionally Mennonites benefitted from the rivalries of the state churches, as when in 1612 the Reformed elector, John Sigismund of Brandenburg, became duke of Prussia, he refused to carry out against those of his own faith the restrictions passed by the Lutheran legislature against "Zwinglians, Calvinists and Anabaptists." Mennonites shared the exemptions of the Zwinglians in this case. Usually Catholic ecclesiastical landowners were more tolerant toward Mennonites than Lutheran business men or clericals who had less to gain from the presence of industrious farmers than did the former.

Such popular antagonisms as occasionally manifested themselves against the Mennonites were based perhaps less on religious than upon economic grounds. At first, living in isolated groups on lands hitherto but sparsely populated, they were able to pursue the even tenor of their way without molestation. But growing prosperous in course of time, they aroused the envy of their less thrifty neighbors and fellow townsmen. The fact that they were foreigners did not help them either, and they were slow to adapt themselves to the culture of their adopted country. Segregated in large secluded groups, practising a proscribed religion, maintaining for nearly

two centuries their Dutch language, and keeping in close touch all this time with the culture of the land of their origin, the descendants of the first settlers retained many of the characteristics of a foreign people unto even the fifth and sixth generations.

When the Mennonites of East Prussia in 1579 asked for permission to settle in Koenigsberg to earn their living there, the reigning duke upon the complaint of the local residents, replied that foreigners had never been permitted to trade in Prussian cities; and besides, an examination of the confession of faith which the Mennonites had submitted for examination, disclosed the fact that the latter did not agree with the Augsburg confession, especially on the matter of baptism and obligations of police duty. Mennonites were consequently denied the right to engage in trade in the city, and those already there were ordered to leave.

Those who benefitted from Mennonite thrift, on the other hand, were the most ardent champions of religious tolerance. In 1676, after the low delta regions had suffered heavy losses from high waters and broken dikes, the Prince of Pomerellen, speaking before the *Landtag* at Marienburg accused the Mennonites of being the cause of the catastrophe. God is punishing Danzig, "the nest of the Mennonites," he said, for tolerating these people within her jurisdiction. He brought a number of deputies to his way of thinking; and these attempted to force an order for exile through the *Landtag*. The deputy from Marienburg, realizing the economic worth of the Mennonite farmers to the country, spoke in their behalf. "One can easily tell," he said "whether a lazy drunken farmer tills the soil, or a sober industrious Mennonite; rather invite more of them than to drive out those already here." Other deputies from Mennonite communities who shared these views interceded for them with the king, who, by

taking a personal interest in the controversy, succeeded in preventing the execution of this order.

The kings of both Poland and Prussia seemed strangely inconsistent through the centuries in their policies toward the Mennonites. Sometimes one king would grant a charter of liberties only to be repealed by his successor. Occasionally the same king would repeatedly reverse his own decrees. The best explanation no doubt for these inconsistencies is to be found in the fact that under absolutism kings did not need to be consistent, but might safely follow their own caprices. Their policies were usually dictated by whatever interests at the time had influence with them. If the clergy, business interests, or city authorities desired the expulsion of the Mennonites or a curtailment of their privileges, and no other interests interposed, kings often issued the desired orders, to be as readily repealed at the request of other influences. Numerous charters of privilege, as well as orders for exile in both Poland and Prussia, were passed during the two hundred years preceding the reign of Frederick the Great. But these orders were passed merely, it seems, for effect; and never meant to be carried out. Mennonites, with few exceptions, paid but little attention to them.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, ruling authorities had discovered a better use here, also, for thrifty and prosperous Mennonites. Like the Jews, they might be made the source of considerable revenue for both local and royal treasuries. In the year 1642 Willibald von Haxberg, minister to the Polish king Wladislav IV, persuaded the king that inasmuch as the Mennonites had been the cause of great financial loss, because of competition, no doubt, to the native business men in the cities of the delta, their property ought to be condemned. The king authorized the confiscation, whereupon von Haxberg promised the Mennonites that if they would

raise fifty thousand thaler from the country churches and a small sum from Danzig and Elbing, he would intercede for them before the king and secure a repeal of the order. The Mennonites protested, but under threat of military force, they were compelled to pay. Appealing to both the provincial estates and the king, as a result of this experience they received another charter guaranteeing them against a repetition of similar extortions in the future.

As late as 1750, however, under another king who had evidently forgotten the promises of his predecessors, the merchants of Danzig were able to close Mennonite shops and other places of business. On the side, the latter were given to understand, however, that they might avoid the calamity by the payment of a substantial sum of tribute money. When told by the Mennonites that they were not financially able to meet the demands, the king suggested they turn to their prosperous Dutch brethren for help. But the Dutch Mennonites, usually generous in their support of every worthy cause, refused to be blackmailed by the king in this case. Instead, they persuaded both the city of Amsterdam and the States General to intercede with the Polish king in behalf of fair play for the Danzig church. This appeal may have had some effect; for, although the king remained obstinate and refused for some time to give back to the Mennonites their former commercial rights, yet upon payment of a smaller amount of tribute money gathered together by the Mennonites from their German rather than Dutch brethren, they were permitted to reopen their places of business.

Military Exemption

Opposition to war did not seem to be a serious cause of antagonism before the days of Frederick the Great.

Military exemption, as noted elsewhere, was a usual inducement offered not only to Mennonites but to other groups as well who would settle on sparsely populated or waste lands all over Europe during that period. In times of stress, of course, as in the case of the siege of Danzig by the Swedes in 1734 when Mennonites were set to the task of putting out the fires caused by incendiary shells, every one was forced into some sort of non-combatant service. Frequently, too, Mennonites were forced to furnish substitutes, a privilege open to all others as well. By the middle of the eighteenth century a special exemption tax was commonly levied upon the Mennonites and paid by them for the privileges they enjoyed.

An interesting exception to the general attitude of the Prussian kings toward the Mennonite refusal to serve in the armies was an incident that occurred in East Prussia in 1723 under the eccentric Frederick William I, noted in history, in addition to his other peculiarities, for his partiality for "long fellows," as his giant Potsdam guards were currently known. When in the year above mentioned, the king's recruiting agents in the region of Tilsit spied out some half dozen stalwart young Mennonites as likely candidates for the king's special service, they did not hesitate to use what brutal force was necessary to drag the unwilling recruits to Potsdam. The church elders interceding in behalf of the young men, reminded Frederick William of the special privileges granted them under his predecessors.⁵

The eccentric king released the unwilling guards, but was determined that there should be no repetition of

5 Impressment was a common method of keeping the armies filled in Prussia during the eighteenth century. It was an extremely unpopular practice among all classes of people and hard to enforce. The King's recruiting agents often used exceedingly brutal and high-handed means in seeking recruits. Conscription was not common before the reign of William I in 1713.

the incident. He ordered all the Mennonites within the Tilsit settlement to leave his kingdom never to return. Most of them left the following year, finding a refuge among their brethren in Polish Prussia. This order did not affect the Mennonites about Koenigsberg. But several years later, in 1732, the same king, after the clergy had brought a serious, though unfounded charge of Socinianism against all the Mennonites, Frederick William was glad to include the city dwellers also in another general order for exile within three months. But the ministers of the king, realizing that the country would lose more than it would gain by the departure of these industrious farmers and artisans, secured a revocation of the order, with certain limitations, however; Mennonites were to remain and return only on condition that they establish textile works within the city, an industry very much desired, and in which the Mennonites were skilled. With the accession of Frederick the Great, a period of greater toleration was inaugurated.

Although divided politically, the Mennonites of the two Prussias had a common cultural background. Like their brethren on the other end of the Baltic they retained the Dutch language in the pulpit for many generations. German was not introduced in Danzig until about the middle of the eighteenth century, and into the country churches somewhat later. The Polish churches seemingly never learned the tongue of their adopted country, but went immediately into the German, due largely no doubt to the fact that the partitioning of Poland occurred about the time the Dutch was being replaced. The language of everyday life, of course, all around the Baltic, was some form of Low German.

Remain a Pure Dutch Community

The large, self-sufficing settlements, especially in the

Polish deltas, made it easy for the Mennonites here to maintain and perpetuate their distinctive doctrines and customs. Propaganda, too, being forbidden, they acquired no new blood during the centuries. A study of typical names as late as 1912 indicates that even today the Prussian Mennonites consist almost exclusively of the descendants of the first Dutch settlers who came here in the sixteenth century. According to this study there are today, among the ten thousand Mennonites of these regions, 369 family names of which the following are the most common: *Penner*, 527; *Wiens*, *Wiehns*, 499; *Dueck*, *Dieck*, *Dyck*, 492; *Claasen*, *Klassen*, 409; *Wiebe*, 434; *Janzen*, *Jantzen*, 292; *Ehnz*, *Entz*, 275; *Janz*, 254; *Freese*, 254; *Regehr*, *Regier*, 253; *Harder*, 184; *Ewert*, 166; *Paul*, 163; *Neufeld*, 161; *Fast*, 157; *Franz*, 141; *Friesen*, 140; *Reimer*, 140; *Epp*, 131; *Feiguth*, 120; *Albrecht*, 120; *Nickel*, 118; *Peters*, 107. Nearly one-half of the entire population, it will be seen, is embraced in the first twenty-one names. The other half is spread over the remaining 348 names, the vast majority of which include but one or two isolated families that came into the church since the settlements in Prussia were first made.

The author of this study says further that the entire list may be classified under four groups—

1. The merchants and artisans who first settled in Danzig and Elbing, seemingly coming from the industrial classes of the larger Dutch cities. The following names are of undoubted Dutch origin, and are not found in the country congregations—*van Almonde*, *van Amersfort*, *Backrach*, *van Benningen*, *Conwentz*, *van Duehren*, *Dunckel*, *van Dyck*, *Eggerath*, *Engman*, *van Eck*, *Focking*, *van Haegen*, *Hansen*, *van Kampen*, *Kauhenhoven*, *Lamberts*, *Momber*, *van Riesen*, *van Roy*, *Rutenberg*, *van Steen*, *Utesch*, *de Beer*. The sudden disappearance of old as well as the sudden appearance of new family names

is due to the fact that especially during the seventeenth century there was a lively migration back and forth between Danzig and Holland.

2. The second group includes Flemish families in the large delta which were subject to only slight changes from migration. The most common names are: *Claasen, Dyck, Dieck, Enz, Epp, Feiguth, Harder, Neufeld, Penner, Regehr, Regier, Reimer, Thiessen, Warkentin, Wienz, and Woelke*. All of these are as common today as they were two hundred years ago. Among them are a number of undoubted German origin.

3. The third group of names of the Frisian churches of the Orloffelfeld and Thiensdorf congregations are sharply divided from the other groups. The following are the most common: *Albrecht, Allert, Bestvater, Dau, Dirksen, Froese, Friesen, Funk, Grunau, Harms, Jantzen, Mekelberger, Martens, Nickel, Pauls, Quapp, Quiring, Unger, and Wiehler*.

4. The fourth group is found principally in the upper Vistula congregations: *Adrian, Balzer, Bartel, Ewert, Franz, Goerz, Kopper, Kliewer, Kerber, Schroeder, Stobbe, Unrau, Voth*.

An interchange of these four groups was not common until within the past hundred years since which time many families have moved from the country churches into the cities, and the sharp distinction between the Flemish and Frisians have been removed.

The uncommon names of *Rogalski, Sawattski, Shepanski* and *Tellitski* are of Polish origin, and represent the few outside additions. *Hamm* and *von Riesen* are undoubtedly from Sweden.⁶

Of the two Dutch factions, the Flemish, many of them, mostly artisans, settled principally in the cities;

6 See Gustav Schultz. *Mennonitische Blaetter*, August, 1912.

while the Frisians, being farmers, preferred the open country. The Flemish, however, were the more conservative, especially the Old Flemish congregations. The two groups rigidly kept up their separate ecclesiastical organizations; of religious fellowship between them, there was none; admission from one to the other was possible only by rebaptism; intermarriage was punishable by excommunication. It was not until well into the nineteenth century that the two groups united. The Frisians and the Germans, however, farther inland had joined their forces somewhat earlier.

Philanthropy and Culture.

Mennonites everywhere have always been most generous in the care of their own poor and sick. They are thoroughly committed to the belief that charity begins at home. And so they never permitted any of their own to become a general charge upon society at large. In each community both in Holland and in the settlements around the Baltic, by the side of the church there was always a home for the aged, and for homeless children, as well as a hospital for the sick. Sometimes several smaller congregations would join together to discharge this obligation. These characteristic charitable institutions have been perpetuated and transplanted since by the descendants of these Prussian Mennonites wherever they have gone—to the steppes of south Russia, the plains of Manitoba and Kansas, and in more recent times to the high plateaus of Mexico, and the wilds of Paraguay.

The Prussian Mennonites were not a literary people. Neither the farmers in the large settlements of the open country nor the business men in the few city congregations showed much taste for literary effort. The only books found among the early settlers were perhaps a few copies in Dutch of Menno Simons, the big Martyr

book, Dirk Philips, and perhaps a stray copy here and there of the *Wandering Soul*. The only native book seems to have been a confession of faith and catechism published in 1671 in the German language by George Hansen, elder of the Flemish church in Danzig. The Mennonites here, however, cast aside their Dutch inheritance much earlier than did their spiritual brethren and fellow countrymen in northwestern Germany.

Hans van Steen

An interesting picture of the religious customs prevailing here at the time can be gathered from a series of letters written by Hans van Steen, elder of the Old Flemish congregation in Danzig, who lived during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The church buildings of the period, according to van Steen, were constructed of wood, usually with a tile roof, without paint either inside or out. Within, there was no pulpit. Instead, along the side wall, the long side, on a raised platform there stood a row of chairs, the middle one of which, slightly elevated above the rest, was reserved for the speaker of the day. The preacher delivered his lengthy sermon seated, without book or notes, or gesture, and in the Dutch language. Before the end of the century, however, with the introduction of the pulpit, sermons were delivered standing, and from notes, or often read from a book of sermons. Hans van Steen, lamenting the rising tide of worldliness remarked "the beautiful simple practises of Menno Simons are disappearing more and more." Worship was plain and simple in form. Organs were not allowed. When the Danzig congregation put one in later, in 1806, there was still much opposition among the country members.

The ministry, as in their original home, was still di-

vided into three grades, elders (*aelteste*) ministers (*Vermaaner* in Holland), and deacons (*Armendiener*, sometimes popularly called "*beuteltraeger*"). The *vorsinger* was also an elected official, in for life, and with a dignity just below that of the deacon. The ministry, as a whole, enjoyed the title *der Ehrsame Dienst* (the worthy ministry). All ranks were elected from among the laity, and served without pay and without special preparation. In fact a promise to accept any call to service was one of the vows required of every male candidate for baptism at the time of admission to the church. Serving for life and without pay, the ministers exercised much more influence over their flocks than did their later salaried brethren of the cloth, who for that reason were more at the mercy of their congregations. The elders especially enjoyed a high degree of power. Although not clothed with quite the "indelible character" with which the Catholics invested their clergy, yet these elders, once elected, held life positions in their congregations, and could not be removed except for gross sin.

Church government was congregational. Frequent conferences were held by the elders from the various congregations, but such resolutions as were adopted on these occasions, must be accepted before they became binding by the members of each congregation separately. It was perhaps an over-emphasis upon the invalidity of infant baptism that retarded the admission of members to the church until they had reached a minimum age of at least twenty years. None were admitted under that. Often they were thirty or more, and fathers and mothers of growing families. A period of formal catechetical instruction always preceded admission. This postponement of the age limit for entrance into the church, together with the insistence that church membership must square with consistent living was the source no doubt

of considerable loss to the membership at large. In the state church everybody belonged—children and sinners.

The Prussian Mennonites at this time were still “close” communionists, very close; the different groups, Frisian and Flemish even discriminating against one another. Within each branch only such as were at peace with the Lord and brethren were admitted to the communion table. To find out the spiritual state of all the members special visitors called *umbitter* visited each family just before communion day in the interests of spiritual harmony.

Discipline was strictly enforced among all the groups. Religion must function in wholesome living. All social obligations had to be rigidly met. Each member must pay his taxes, and tribute money. To refuse to pay the latter was to make the burden fall the more heavily upon the remainder of the membership, since such taxes were levied in a lump sum upon the membership as a whole. The ministers had much to say in their disciplinary capacities about gambling, dancing, and kindred frivolities. Corporal punishment of servants is also frequently mentioned as a cause for church discipline. In 1745 a group of applicants for baptism in one of the large churches, including several members from prominent families, were refused admission because they appeared in unbecoming clothes which had been imported from Holland—shoes with buckles instead of the traditional strings, neckscarfs, and cuffs on their coats. One had even visited a theatrical shop, the ministers said. These applicants no doubt repented of their vanities in the course of the year, for the next year they were admitted. There was much dispute over the wearing of wigs, too, but when it was found that in Holland even the preachers were wearing them, these articles of adornment could not be kept out of the Danzig church either.

Marriage was a sacred rite, though not a sacrament as among the Catholics. It must be performed on a sacred day, therefore, and in a sacred place—on Sunday and in church, never in a private home. Proposals were carried to the bride from the prospective bridegroom by the above mentioned *umbitter*, a kind of an allround handy man, ranking just below the *vorsinger* and deacon as a permanent church functionary. In a meeting of ministers in Danzig in 1765 one of the elders lamented the fact that the beautiful old custom of sending two men with a marriage proposal to the prospective bride, and the return in two weeks for a final answer, was passing.

Mennonites were not permitted to hold public funerals; nor were funeral sermons common before 1800. Instead of a sermon it was still customary for some friend of the deceased to write a poem in commemoration of the latter. This poem set to some well known melody would be sung at the funeral, and would constitute nearly the whole of the service. Since the verses were long and many, and the melody slow, the time consumed would equal that of an ordinary funeral oration. The funeral hymn of Hans van Steen, himself, who died in 1781, and which was composed by his friend, Hans Momber, contained twenty-four long stanzas. Funeral notices and wedding invitations, since both occasions were open to the entire membership, were carried from house to house by the “umbitter.”

Many of the old customs, like the Dutch language, were passing at the close of the eighteenth century, much to the sorrow of faithful old van Steen who saw no good in the new things that were being ushered in on the eve of the French Revolution.

A few words here specifically regarding the Danzig congregation may not be out of order. As already noted,

the first settlers in the Danzig region did not locate within the city walls, but had to remain in the outside suburbs and country side. Danzig though a free city yet was politically under the domination of the kings of Poland. Only the recognized state religions were permitted within the city walls. But in course of time Mennonites drifted into the city proper, but were granted only limited rights of worship within their private homes. Both branches of the church were represented in Danzig, the Old Flemish, and the Old Frisian. The Flemish built their first meeting house in a back alley within the city walls in 1648; the Frisians a little later.

Both Flemish and Frisians kept in rather close contact with their Dutch brethren for a good many years. In fact a certain wing of the Flemish in the Netherlands came to be known as the Danzig Old Flemish as a result of this connection between the Danzigers and the Dutch. Dutch remained the language of the pulpit in Danzig until well toward the close of the eighteenth century. In 1808 the two wings of the church united into one organization. At its peak in the seventeenth century the Mennonite population in Danzig and environs numbered beyond one thousand. This number had dwindled to about four hundred by the middle of the past century, but has since again about trebled, due largely to a more liberal policy since that time toward admitting outside members, and to migration from the country districts into the city.

Under Frederick the Great

The reign of Frederick the Great, from 1740 to 1786, was in a way a turning point in the history of the Prussian Mennonites. It was during this period and the years immediately following that the different regions in which they lived were united under one political rule.

Frederick, being of a liberal turn of mind, granted the greatest freedom of religion to his subjects. One of the earliest acts, after his accession in 1740, was to invite the Mennonites who had been exiled by his predecessor several years before to return to their former homes. In 1744 he granted the Mennonites of Koenigsberg full rights of citizenship, more than fifty years before similar privileges were enjoyed by those in Danzig under Polish rule. Two years later he suggested to his recruiting agents that they respect the convictions of his Mennonite subjects in the Elbing district in the matter of taking part in war.

It is small wonder, therefore, that, when in 1772, at the time of the first partitioning of Poland, the delta region fell to the lot of Frederick, the Mennonites here were well pleased. In order to express their loyalty to their new king as well as pleasure at his accession, the churches about Marienburg, on the occasion of a royal celebration in that city which the king attended, presented him with an appropriate gift from the products of their farms—two well-fed oxen ready for the king's table, four hundred pounds of butter, twenty cakes of cheese, together with a large assortment of chickens and ducks.

This gift was evidently meant to be something more than a mere token of appreciation, however, for at the same time the king was handed a petition in which the churches asked for a confirmation of the liberties they had enjoyed under the Polish rulers, including exemption from military service.

Complete religious toleration Frederick was glad to promise; but as to military exemption, that had by this time become another matter. He owed too much to a well organized army in the expansion of the Prussian

kingdom to look with indifference to any shrinking of the supply of available troops. The growing spirit of militarism engendered in middle Europe by the long wars of the eighteenth century boded no good for the peace loving Mennonites. So long as the Mennonite settlements within Frederick's domain had remained small and scattered, the granting of exemption for other equally important service did not materially weaken the military strength of the nation; and Frederick, as already noted, had not been hesitant in providing for the tender consciences of his Mennonite subjects. With the acquisition, however, of the large compact areas within the lowlands of the Vistula, almost solidly filled with a people opposed to the use of military force, the problem took on a different aspect to a king bent on still further expansion of his possessions. With increasing warfare and growing armies, impressment was becoming more necessary, and service more unpopular among the masses. The example of a specially privileged class in the midst of a reluctant people made the task of both the recruiting officers as well as the impressment gangs more difficult.

But Frederick finally decided that money was as essential to a program of conquest as soldiers, and as hard to get, and the Mennonites, because of some peculiar twist in their logic, as already noted, did not draw fine distinctions between direct and indirect service. A fairly satisfactory compromise was temporarily worked out, therefore, in the course of the negotiations during the years immediately succeeding. In 1780, the great Frederick granted the Mennonites a special charter in which they were guaranteed complete religious liberty with equal rights to carry on any kind of business, on condition, however, that they pay the annual sum of five thousand thaler for the support of the military academy at Culm.

In the meantime, an earlier regulation passed by the ministry in 1774, that Mennonites were not to increase by the purchasing of more land except with the consent of the king, was full of troublesome possibilities for the future. Frederick himself evidently did not rigidly enforce this regulation; for during the next three years Mennonite holdings increased by nearly three hundred. But the Lutheran clergy in the region of the Mennonite settlements now also became interested, with the king's recruiting marshals, in the further expansion of these industrious non-conformists; for the support of the state church as well, rested upon a substantial Lutheran landowning population.

These conditions resulted in a new edict issued in 1789 by Frederick's successor, and binding on the two Prussias, in which the same provisions for military exemptions were retained as before, but a more drastic means of preventing the further purchase of lands was stipulated.⁷ The further acquisition of land was now denied the Mennonites; nor were any more to be admitted from the outside except in case a prospective settler had money to the value of two thousand thaler. Such a prospect might locate with the consent of the king's council upon such sparsely settled lands as were suitable to cattle raising and small dairying. All such, however, and their descendants after them, of military age, were to pay a special tax of one thaler to a general hospital fund. These privileges accrued only to simon pure Mennonites. All children of mixed marriages must be re-

7 The free city of Danzig did not become a part of the kingdom of Prussia until 1793, after which the city and its immediate country environs was included in all those regulations. When Mennonites after this bought real estate they had to pay a six per cent sales tax instead of one per cent required of the non-Mennonites. They also contributed six hundred thaler toward the support of the Culm military academy. The former restriction was not removed until 1847, and the latter in 1867.

garded as members of the state churches, and outside of these special concessions.

It was quite evident by this time that both church and state were determined upon stopping the further growth of Mennonitism. Hampered by excessive and unfair taxes, unable to provide new homes for their growing young people, and fearful of the future, with heavy hearts the Mennonites now looked about them for a new asylum where they might be free to exercise their religious convictions without fear of governmental restraint. Those most vitally concerned at first were the landless and the more conscientious.

But where were they to go? America evidently was not given serious consideration at this time. Most providential must have seemed just now in their perplexity the invitation from Catherine II, of Russia, which had been read in one of the Danzig churches in the summer of 1786 urging them to come to southern Russia where they might enjoy all the privileges, religious and civil, and even more than had been denied them in Prussia. Many of them accepted this invitation. During the next half century, about half of the whole delta Mennonite population migrated to the steppes of south Russia. But that story is told in a succeeding chapter.

Of the total Prussian Mennonite population at this time only about one thousand lived in East Prussia; the remaining twelve thousand in the Vistula and Nogat deltas.

During the Napoleonic Wars

Although it is fair to assume that those who remained after the exodus just described were among the better established of the Mennonite population, and perhaps the more liberal minded on the military question, yet they continued during the troublous years that followed

the struggle for their traditional beliefs as valiantly as ever. During the early stages of the Napoleonic wars when the Prussian population seemed to be divided in their allegiance and the patriotic spirit ran low, the Mennonites, though non-resistant, yet remained loyal to their king, and willing to render the fatherland any aid that did not conflict with their convictions. In 1806 when Frederick William and his court, after Jena and Auerstadt, stopped at Graudenz in the course of their flight to Memel, the Mennonites of the neighboring regions gathered together some thirty thousand thaler for their king as an evidence of their loyalty. Abraham Nickel, the deacon of the Schoensee congregation, was commissioned to present the gift. Nickel and his wife met the royal pair, and as the deacon made the offering, his wife at the same time gave the Queen a basket of butter to the great delight, so tradition says, of the grand lady.

During the so-called War of Liberation, patriotic fervor revived, and a strong spirit of nationalism swept over the land. When a universal military training law was passed in 1814 without any special consideration for Mennonite scruples, the elders found it a difficult task to maintain the faith against the popular tide or even to curb the military ardor of some of their young people. How difficult it must have been for the young men of the time to stand for their principles in the face of this tide of patriotism and against the ridicule and taunts of their fellows can perhaps best be appreciated by the conscientious objectors in America who passed through the recent World War. The elders in their appeal to the king for a recognition of their traditional views said, "We will gladly suffer any loss to our property and possessions, and what is much harder, the scorn and derision of our neighbors if only our religious convictions may be spared."

Frederick William promised to observe their old privileges, but at the expense of a substantial tax instead. Just how heavy this tax was is not known except that it was extraordinarily high. During the entire period of the Napoleonic wars the Mennonites paid special tribute above that paid to the Culm academy, a sum it is said, mounting to thousands of dollars.

That the elders still rigidly endeavored to maintain the historic attitude of the church toward war during this period is shown in the case of a certain von Riesen, a member of the Elbing congregation, who, because he volunteered for service and fought at Waterloo, was excommunicated by his elder. After his return, von Riesen sued the elder for damages and won his suit in the local courts. But the other elders all supported their Elbing fellow minister, and appealing the case to the higher courts, secured a reversal of the decision, on the grounds that the plaintiff had no cause for action.

Revolution of 1848

The Revolution of 1848, followed a few years later by Prussia's first constitution, marked another turning point in the history of Mennonite non-resistance. The Frankfurt Parliament of that year laid down the fundamental principle that religious conviction could not stand in the way of performing one's civic duties. While the proposed unification attempted at Frankfurt failed to materialize, and this regulation remained merely a pious wish, yet it was indicative of a new danger threatening the traditional peace principles of the Mennonites.

Democracies are much less considerate of conscientious scruples, and have less patience with special privileges granted to minorities than do autocracies. It was always because of their economic worth that Mennonites were granted special privileges by autocratic

rulers--in such countries as Prussia, Austria, Russia and in more recent times in such backward states as Mexico and Paraguay. The king of Prussia himself, Frederick William IV recognized that fact when, in the early fifties, in the course of an interview with some of the Mennonite elders, who had interceded with him in behalf of their ancient privileges, he replied that now, since Prussia had a constitution, questions of special privilege no longer rested with him but rather with the legislature which represented the people.

It was at this time that the last large migration to Russia took place. Between 1853 and 1860 some two hundred and fifty families located a new settlement on the Volga with the promise of military exemption, and other privileges somewhat less liberal than those granted originally to the colonists of south Russia.

Unfortunate, too, for the peace principles of the Vistula Mennonites at this time was the fact that their Mennonite brethren in the other corner of Prussia and the lower Rhine had about given up their non-resistant faith. It was a Mennonite deputy from Crefeld, it will be remembered, von Bekerath, who opposed in the Frankfurt Parliament the special consideration for Mennonites which had been suggested by a non-Mennonite Prussian deputy from Danzig.

From this time on the special status of the Mennonites was increasingly threatened by the growing democracy of the period and the increasing spirit of militarism. In 1861 a Marienburg deputy proposed in the Prussian Landtag the repeal of the exemption clause. This again necessitated the sending of a special commission of Mennonite elders to Berlin. During the Danish and Austrian wars of 1864 to 1866 the Mennonite question was forgotten for a few years; but the growing nationalism and militarism following these overwhelmingly suc-

cessful conflicts did the Mennonite cause no good in the long run. It was during this period that William Mannhardt, a *privat-docent* of the University of Berlin, and son of the Mennonite pastor in Danzig, was commissioned by the churches to draw up a compendium of the historic Mennonite position on the question of war for submission to the authorities at Berlin. The result was the comprehensive treatise now known as *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreussischen Mennoniten* published in 1863.

The Cabinet Order of 1868

The end came in 1867 with the founding of the North German Confederation. In that year Bismarck pushed through the Confederation Parliament a new universal military service law with no exemptions. The country churches again sent a committee of five elders to Berlin in the interests of their cause. This committee was granted interviews with most of the ministers, including von Roon, the minister of war, but not with Bismarck; and with both the king and the crown prince. All of these listened to the elders with respect but refused to commit themselves as to future concessions. The crown prince, when told, in the course of an interview, that the Mennonites, if they could not secure some sort of guarantee of their religious liberties, might be forced to migrate enmass to Russia, replied "In that case beware that you may not repeat the same experience in Russia that you are passing through here, for there everything is still in the making." The crown prince spoke better than he knew. That is just what happened to the Mennonites in Russia a few years later.

The elders returned to their congregations with no further assurances for the future than the suggestion that perhaps the new law might be modified so as to permit those having conscientious scruples to accept some

sort of non-combatant service instead of regular duty. On March 3, 1868 these promises were given the force of law through a Cabinet Order according to which all members of the churches then established and their descendants would be granted the privilege of entering hospital, clerical, or other specified lines of non-combatant duty in the army in case they objected to the actual use of arms.

Thus was ended for all the Mennonites of north Germany the long struggle lasting for several centuries to maintain what undoubtedly still remained the most distinctive of all Mennonite doctrines. This struggle, not serious in the beginning, as already suggested, became increasingly so with the rise of the forces of democracy and militant nationalism. Perhaps a contributory factor to the loss of their old status was the growing lukewarmness of some of the Mennonites themselves, especially among the younger element. In Holland and northwest Germany the Mennonites had already, as noted above, forsaken their own non-resistant principles.

The elders, however, in the Prussian churches for the most part, especially in the country, were not inclined to surrender the old faith without further struggle. Refusing to accept even the rather liberal terms of the new Cabinet Order, they further petitioned the authorities, threatened conforming members with excommunication, and urged emigration. But all in vain. The case so far as the Mennonites were concerned, although the agitation was kept up for some years longer, was ended. The great majority of the young men after this accepted the non-combatant service offered; a few went in for full duty, some of whom were at first excommunicated; a smaller number of those with more tender consciences refused even the terms of the Cabinet Order. For these latter nothing was left but emigration.

As for the elders, Wiebe of the *Fuerstenwerder* con-

gregation, when he found that his members would accept the new order of things almost unanimously resigned his charge and left for Russia. A few years later elder Ewert of the conservative *Heubuden* congregation with the less liberal element of his membership migrated to America, settling in Kansas and Nebraska.

In the course of time Mennonite young men, entering military training in times of peace, found no logical reason for stepping out of the army in times of war; and so they gradually lost all their anti-war scruples. In the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 many took actual service; and in the recent World War there were but few who insisted upon their rights under the Cabinet Order of 1868, which it may be noted had been incorporated into the constitution of the empire in 1870. With the loss of their special privileges, of course, the Prussian Mennonites were relieved of the obligation to render tribute for the benefit of the military academy at Culm which they had paid annually up to this time.

Loss of Old Traditions

With the passing of non-resistance also went other distinctive practises and beliefs which had ever marked the Mennonites as a peculiar people somewhat set apart from the rest of the world—the ban against marrying outsiders, as well as that against open communion, and an educated and salaried ministry. In the country churches, however, there are even today a number of ministers who are elected from among the laity and who serve without pay. In some cases the elder may be an outsider with special training and serving for remuneration, while his associates in the congregation are elected according to the old method, a custom common also among some of the descendants of the Prussian Mennonites on the plains of Kansas and Oklahoma.

The city churches departed from the old order more readily during this period than did those in the country. The Danzig congregation had no representative on the committee of elders which visited Berlin in the interests of military exemption in 1868, and took no part in the struggle among the elders to secure a modification of the Cabinet Order of that year. The Elbing-Ellerwald congregation which had been made up of both city and country residents, divided into two congregations in 1852 on the basis of city and country dwellers. The questions on which they divided were mixed marriages, an educated ministry, attitude toward military service, religious instruction for children, and the enforcement of a strict discipline. Theologically all the churches of this region are still more conservative than are their brethren in either Holland or Northwest Germany.

Prominent Men

The compact Prussian country churches did not produce as many men of prominence as did the smaller city churches in western Germany along the Dutch border. Among a few others, however, must be mentioned Herman Suderman, the German dramatist and novelist, who was the son of a substantial East Prussian Mennonite farmer-brewer. Among the well-known families who have served the Vistula congregations in one capacity or another, the Mannhardts occupy a conspicuous place—Jacob the first salaried minister in Danzig in 1836, founder of the *Mennonitische Blaetter* in 1854; his son William, author of the above mentioned *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreussischen Mennoniten* in 1863; and Herman, the late Danzig pastor.

VI

THE SOUTH GERMANS

HAPSBURG CROWN LANDS

While the persecutions following the Münster catastrophe of 1535 effectually checked the further growth of Anabaptism within the empire, it did not completely annihilate the movement. For another full century scattered Anabaptist or Mennonite communities succeeded in keeping themselves alive in mountain fastnesses and out of the way places all across south Germany from the upper stretches of the Rhine to the head-waters of the Danube, from Strasburg to Vienna, never venturing far, however, beyond the confines of the German speaking regions.

During all this time Mennonites were bitterly oppressed here. Men and women were burned at the stake and beheaded, well up to the close of the sixteenth century. Persecution was most severe nearest the seat of Catholic imperial authority, the crown lands of the Hapsburgs—the Austrias, Carniola, Carinthia, Salzburg, and especially in the Tyrol. In all these regions the will of the Hapsburgs had full sway, and the imperial edict of 1529, with its later confirmations, was executed to the letter.

In Tyrol magistrates and clergy did their utmost to completely uproot every trace of Mennonitism. Imprisonment, galley slavery, and death at the stake were the penalties prescribed for following one's conscience. Often the common people, and occasionally even the jurors who were forced to pass sentence, as well as the execu-

tioners themselves were in sympathy with their victims, and reluctantly carried out their part of the bloody program. In order to encourage the betrayal of those accused of heresy by their neighbors, and especially to thin out the ranks of the more aggressive leaders, an edict was issued at Innsbruck in 1540 promising one hundred gulden for the delivery of a Mennonite minister if alive; fifty if dead, and ten for an ordinary member.

Hoping that the sight of the executioner's block or the funeral pyre might serve as a deterrent to further defection from the faith, executions were usually made public spectacles. But the results were not always as expected. Mennonite martyrs often approached their fate boldly and joyfully, exhorting the sympathetic spectators to a nobler Christian life. The recruits made on these occasions, frequently outnumbered the victims of the executioner's torch. A slight acquaintance with the art of mental processes should have taught the ruling authorities that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and that compulsion never changed a man's religious convictions. But that was still before psychology was invented.

Hans Maendl the Moravian Martyr

Among a long list of victims during the century was Hans Maendl, a Hutterite missionary from Moravia, who had been apprehended in Bavaria in 1560 and brought back to Innsbruck as a prisoner. Here with two companions he was kept the better part of a year in a deep and damp dungeon filled with bats and mice and other vermin. After repeated attempts to turn the pious man from his faith, all three were condemned to a public death, the two companions to be beheaded, but Maendl to be burned at the stake. The jurors in this case, reluctant to pass judgment upon the victim against their own

convictions, were themselves, thrown into prison for declaring that they "could not burden their consciences with such a case and that they would sooner endure, therefore, any punishment whatsoever."

The three were led to the place of execution together. Maendl, attempting to speak to the assembled crowd, was interrupted by one of the executioners, *Mein Hans, hoer doch ein wenig auf*. But the devoted martyr kept on until forced to stop from sheer exhaustion. Because the two companions were of less heroic mold, it was decided to dispose of them first. The second victim, however, as he stepped toward the block suddenly turned about, calling in a ringing voice, "Here I leave wife and child, house and home, life and limb for the sake of the truth and my faith." Courageously facing forward again he laid his head upon the axman's block and was beheaded. Maendl in the meantime, at the close of his exhortation, seeing the heads of his two friends lying near by exclaimed, "My brethren, he who is faithful to the end, wins everything." The executioner then tied his victim to a ladder and threw him alive upon the pile of burning fagots where he was burned to ashes.

Throughout the century, and especially during the latter half, there was constant intercommunication between all the Austrian territories and the Moravian Hutterites by way of the Tyrolean mountain trails. The authorities were vigilant in guarding the passes and bridges along the highways over which travellers made their way back and forth. Moravian missionaries especially were summarily dealt with when caught.

BAVARIA

Bavaria, next door neighbor to the Hapsburg crown lands, and equally devoted to the cause of Catholic domination, was no less persistent in rooting out all traces

of Mennonite and other forms of religious dissent. The Passau prisoners of 1537 have already been mentioned. According to the Hutterite chroniclers, two hundred and thirty-three had sacrificed their lives in Bavaria by 1581. One of the last of the martyrs was Thomas Haan who was cruelly tortured and put to death in Freiburg in 1592.

Moravian missionaries were active here, too, as elsewhere in south Germany. They passed back and forth continually between the regions of the upper Rhine and Moravia along the Danube and its tributaries throughout the period known as the Golden Age; and were the object of special hatred and vindictive persecution on the part of the ruling authorities. In fact it is doubtful whether the Mennonite movement could have survived through the century in South Germany without the unflagging zeal and undaunted courage of these humble followers of Menno Simons and Jacob Hutter. They braved every danger and endured every hardship to keep the faith alive beyond their own land, and to carry the invitation from their own Moravian households to their distressed and discouraged brethren throughout central Europe, offering to share with them the blessings, material and spiritual, which the Moravians themselves were enjoying in the land of milk and honey. The Hutterites seemingly were the only group of Anabaptists whose missionary zeal survived the Münster collapse, and the persecuting zeal of all the Catholic rulers after that.

The promise of religious liberty and the certainty of material prosperity appealed tremendously to the harassed and oppressed Mennonites, who were being hounded from pillar to post here at this time. Even those with property often were glad to dispose of their possessions, and finding their way to the promised land, to turn over all their money to the Households for their own and the common good.

The invitation was especially attractive to the poverty stricken and unfortunate; for the Hutterites did not discriminate between the poor and the rich; all alike were welcome to share their blessings. An old chronicler, a contemporary, but unsympathetic writer, puts this appeal into the words of an imaginary missionary in Bavaria as follows:

"Dear Uncle Liendl" or perhaps "Aunt Urschel, etc. Come to us in Moravia, the Promised Land, which is ours as a gift of God. There you will fare much better than here. Neither you nor your children need suffer poverty, nor endure hard work. There you will be assured good food, comfortable shelter and clothes, your children training and schooling; you will be freed of all worry. You, Aunt Andl, since you are old, you will not be required to do anything except to spin and rest as you like the live long day. Uncle Thomas will not need to work except what and when he pleases."

Hundreds and perhaps thousands answered this call during the last half of the sixteenth century. The emigration movement ended only when during the Thirty Years War the persecuting zeal of the Jesuits and the ravages of the invading armies that passed back and forth across Moravia during that period completely broke up the Hutterite Households. With their scattering, Mennonitism, too, disappeared from the rest of middle Europe outside of Switzerland.

In modern Baden, Wurttemberg, and Hesse Mennonites shared the experiences of their brethren to the East, except that during the latter half of the century at least they enjoyed milder treatment than in Bavaria and the Austrias.

THE PALATINATE

In the Palatinate, too, especially after the reigning counts had exchanged their Catholic religion for the Lutheran or Reformed faith, the Mennonites, though still

limited in their religious and civil rights, yet were not hounded to death as in the Catholic countries. Here both the state and the church relied more on persuasion than on force to bring about religious conformity. Believing that religious dissent was due more to ignorance than to any well grounded religious convictions, and that in order to win these humble Mennonite peasants and artisans back into the fold, it was only necessary to have the well-trained theological doctors of the state church to show them the way of the true faith, the state church authorities held frequent disputations throughout the country in the interests of religious uniformity. One of the best known of these occasions was the debate held at Frankental in 1571.

The Frankental Debate

This discussion lasted for nineteen days. The Elector, count Frederick III, a Calvinist, and especially eager to win back the Mennonites, appeared personally at the opening session, and remained in touch with all the later proceedings through a personal representative. He had given the proposed conference wide publicity. And to encourage a liberal attendance from all the Mennonite settlements both within and without the Palatinate, he promised a safe conduct for fourteen days before and after the meeting, and full religious toleration during the sessions to all who might attend.

In spite of these assurances, however, only fifteen Mennonites appeared, including two Hutterites, a delegate from Austria, and the remainder from other parts of south Germany. None were present from Holland, although representatives from there had been expected.

The questions under discussion were those usually debated on occasions of this sort—the trinity, incarnation, original sin, the ban, community of goods, separa-

tion of husband and wife, magistracy, oath, infant baptism and the Lord's Supper. On many of these beliefs the Mennonites and the Calvinist theologians agreed. On the distinctive Mennonite doctrines regarding the magistracy, oath, and infant baptism they hopelessly differed. Respecting the incarnation, the Mennonites hesitated to express themselves except to say that they did not wholly accept Menno's peculiar views on the subject nor did they understand all the subtle distinctions made by the Calvinist theologians.

In many ways this was an unequal contest. The Mennonite spokesmen were simple working men, and although in exact knowledge of the Scriptures they excelled the state church representatives, they were no theologians. They were not able to clothe their beliefs in theological and philosophical formulas, but had to confine themselves to Biblical phraseology. "We are not able to answer your questions," said one of them, "except in the simple language of the Bible. It seems strange to us that you should persist in asking us many questions that are beyond us." The Hutterites took little part in the discussions; even when the question of the community of goods, on which they differed from other Mennonites, was referred to them, they refused to commit themselves. They were present merely as observers.

Of course no one changed his mind as a result of this debate. Rather each side was more confirmed than ever in the righteousness of its own cause. The Elector, sorely disappointed in the meager results obtained by his theologians, could find relief only in calling the Mennonites bad names. *Böse Buben* he called them, a sixteenth century German phrase rather hard to turn into twentieth century English. *Impudent knaves* is perhaps as good a rendering as any.

Reconciliation of rival doctrinal views only, of course,

would not have been sufficient to bring the Mennonites back into the fold of the established church. They still insisted that church membership must be conditioned by righteous living. A state church, they said, from the very nature of the case could not differentiate between saint and sinner. Both alike were entitled to membership. That the ruling authorities recognized this fact is shown by their repeated insistence upon a more consistent religious life among both the lay and official members. Godliness to them, however, was largely a matter of continual church attendance. To this end inducements were offered officials especially who might set a good example in this respect to attend regularly. Church going was to be made easy and respectable. Such churches as had not already provided special seats for the dignitaries were to do so; and the officials on the other hand were forbidden on pain of severe punishment to go on pleasure excursions or visit the taverns during the hours of worship.

Mennonites seemingly were not converted by any of these means. Severer measures were then tried. Oppression was again renewed, and became increasingly burdensome. Many of the victims, as already suggested, found their way to Moravia, but with the scattering of the Hutterite Households this retreat, too, became closed to them, and Mennonitism in the Palatinate died out also. By the close of the Thirty Years War there were no organized communities left, and but few scattered individual families.

Strasburg

The imperial city of Strasburg remained during the entire sixteenth century, as it had been earlier, the most tolerant of all the southern regions toward Mennonite dissent. It was here, it will be remembered, that many

of the Mennonite conferences were held during the century, including those of the years 1555 and 1557 where Menno's peculiar views of the incarnation, and his strict interpretation of the ban were practically repudiated.

Another important Strasburg gathering was the conference of 1568 for the purpose of drawing up certain rules of discipline, which was attended by many ministers and elders from all over southern Germany including several who had participated in the discussions of 1557.

The rules drawn up at this meeting for both the ministry and laity must be interpreted in the light of the conditions of the times. This was still, it must be remembered, an age of persecution. Many of the small congregations were bereft of their leaders through persecution. Travelling elders, therefore, were commissioned to ordain ministers wherever necessary, to visit the wives and children of such evangelists as were away on a dangerous mission or perhaps in prison, and to care for the orphans. These overseers were to be provided with all the means necessary for their work.

Because of the extreme hardships following the separation of families when one member was a Mennonite and the other was not, those contemplating marriage were advised to "marry in the Lord." This became a fixed practise of the church, and found its way later into most of the confessions of faith and rules of discipline. Young people before entering into the married state were admonished to do so only with the consent of their parents and the knowledge of the ministers.

It was because Mennonites had no legal standing before the law, perhaps, and because of their non-resistant faith of which their non-Mennonite neighbors took advantage in all contractual relations, that those having money to lend were advised to place it with their own brethren rather than with the world. In case of diffi-

culty in collecting what was due them, they might make use of the courts if necessary but were in no way to resort to extreme compulsion.

Several of these regulations evidently were in the interest of harmonizing conflicting views among the brethren. In the breaking of bread at the communion service, there was to be no fixed rule as to whether the minister was to break the bread for all, or each was to break it for himself. The practise of avoidance, the source of so much dissension among their Dutch brethren just at this time, was to be retained, but it was to be administered in all temperance and humility. Penitents who were to be taken into the church again after confession of wrong doing, were to be received without kneeling; but this concession was in no way to apply to the practise of kneeling in prayer. The doctrine of the incarnation, also a knotty problem at the time among both the Dutch and south German Mennonites, was to be interpreted according to the simple words of the Bible; and all needless arguments and hair splitting distinctions were to be avoided.

Brethren should greet one another with the "kiss of the Lord"; others should be saluted with the words "The Lord help you." Tailors and seamstresses were admonished not to depart from the simple customs of the land in the making of their clothes, and were not to follow worldly fashions. Those seeking admission into the church from another group practising adult baptism should be carefully examined as to their faith, and if found truly converted need not submit to rebaptism.

Respect for the ministry was commanded. Fault finding and slandering was punishable according to the Gospel manner. Those attending divine services were not at liberty to leave the meeting before the close,

though it might last for five or six hours, except for a "Godly reason."

The regulation that those desiring to engage in a big business enterprise must first consult the elders and ministers was a thoroughly reasonable demand if the entire brotherhood was expected to make good any losses to outsiders that such an enterprise might entail. Mennonites were especially anxious that their reputation for business honesty and integrity should be maintained.

The Nimrods among the brethren who had a weakness for catching or shooting game were admonished not to yield to the impulse on penalty of excommunication, except in case of game for which a reward had been offered. In case a brother was set to guard duty in village, field or forest he might hire a substitute, but if he himself served he was not to carry a deadly weapon.

These regulations, first passed in 1568, seemed to be widely followed, and were often confirmed in later years throughout south Germany and elsewhere.

Swiss Exiles in the Palatinate

Just about as the last traces of Mennonitism were being blotted out of south Germany by the ravages of the Thirty Years War, a new immigrant movement set in from Switzerland. This was just the time, it will be noted, when a final desperate attempt was being made in both Bern and Zurich to get rid of the troublesome Mennonites forever through wholesale persecution. As for the latter, though not particularly attracted by the war devastated and depopulated lands along the upper Rhine and Neckar, yet they preferred even these meager prospects to the sure hardships that awaited them in their own native fruitful, though inhospitable fatherland.

Most of the exiles followed the natural course of the Rhine by way of the Vosges mountains in Alsace to the

fertile, though at the time, desolate valley of the upper Rhine, in what was known as the Palatinate. As early as 1650 we hear of a small group located on the right side of the river south of Heidelberg. In 1661, fifty of these were arrested near Sinsheim for worshipping secretly in the forests against the law of the land, and fined one hundred reichstaler by the local authorities. The Elector, Karl Ludwig, however, who after a prolonged absence had returned some ten years previous from the English court of his uncle Charles I, where he had gotten his fill of Puritan intolerance, ordered that the Mennonites under his jurisdiction be permitted to worship unmolested, but that they should pay an annual tribute for the privilege. Several years before, in 1654, the same Elector had granted a group of Hutterites from Hungary the privilege of establishing a Bruderhof near Manheim with rights quite liberal for that age of intolerance; for none but the three tolerated religions, Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed, were given any recognition by the treaty of Westphalia. Among these concessions were those of citizenship within the city of Manheim, exemption from judicial, police and military duty; and commercial privileges equal to all other subjects. Religious propaganda, however, was strictly prohibited. These liberal terms were not to be regarded as rights, however, but rather as privileges. The Hutterites were still merely a tolerated people; and the symbol of their bondage was a special tax of fifty florin, paid annually.

By this time Karl Ludwig, the Reformed elector, more tolerant than either his Catholic or Lutheran predecessors had been, and anxious to repopulate his devastated farms and rebuild his ruined cities, was willing to waive religious orthodoxy in his search for thrifty farmers and industrious artisans. Liberal invitations were sent out to the persecuted people of other lands to come to the

Palatinate where religious toleration would be granted them. In 1664 special inducements were offered the Mennonites also, concessions not quite so liberal as those offered the Hutterites earlier, but in the main not particularly burdensome. There was to be freedom of worship, but not in public meeting houses; nor were more than twenty families to meet at any one time in a given place. No revolutionary nor heretical doctrines were to be taught; religious propaganda among the members of the state church was prohibited. Mennonites, too, must remember that they were but a tolerated people, for they were to pay as protection money an annual tribute of three gulden for the first year, and six after that. Failure to comply with these conditions was punishable by expulsion from the country.

This act of toleration, limited though it was, must have seemed like an act of Providence to the Mennonites of Switzerland where just at this time, 1671, another drive was being made by the governments of Bern and Zurich to expel them bag and baggage. According to van Braght the martyrologist, some seven hundred Mennonites were ruthlessly driven out of their homes during the year, nearly all of whom found their way to the Palatinate. Some remained in the Vosges mountains. From a letter written to the Dutch churches in 1671 asking for help to care for the Swiss refugees we learn that

“Our Swiss friends are now coming this way in large parties, so that there have already arrived over two hundred persons, and among them are many old, gray haired people, both men and women, that have reached seventy, eighty, yea ninety years; also a number that are lame and crippled; carrying their bundles on their backs, with their children in their arms, some of good cheer, some with tearful eyes, particularly the old and feeble persons, who now in their great age are compelled to wander about in their misery, and go to strange countries; and many of them have nothing on which to sleep by night, so that I and others with me, have now

for about two weeks had to make it our regular work to provide shelter and other necessities for them."

A little later we are told by the same authority that about six hundred and forty had arrived, and that another hundred are to be expected soon from Alsace.

Most of these refugees finally found a welcome on the estates of noblemen in the fertile Rhine valley on both sides of the river along the Neckar and south of Heidelberg on the right side, and from Worms to Mannheim and Alzey to Neustadt on the left. Soon their industry and thrift had transformed what had once been a ruined land into a garden of plenty; orchards were replanted, and villages rebuilt. Prosperity returned and few traces of the late war were to be seen in the regions which they occupied.

Burning Up the Palatinate

Unfortunately this prosperity was of short duration. In 1688 began the so-called *War of the Palatinate* when the command of Louis XIV to "burn up the Palatinate" was almost literally carried out by his lieutenants. The rich fields of the Rhine valley were again laid waste. Macauley's classic description of this event in spite of that historian's predilection for fine phrases and well balanced sentences at the expense of historical accuracy may not be much overdrawn.

"The flames went up from every market place, every country seat within the devoted province. The fields where the corn had been sown were plowed up; the orchards were hewn down. No promise of a harvest was left on the fertile plains near what had been Frankental. Not a vine, not an almond tree was to be seen on the slopes of the sunny hills round what had once been Heidelberg."

The Mennonites did not escape this general conflagration. Some two hundred families were driven from

their homes to seek refuge further down the Rhine, and seek help from their brethren in lower Germany and Holland. Most of these returned later to try life all over again in their former homes. Others never did.

Of the fifty odd Mennonite prisoners sent down the Rhine by the Bernese government in 1709 with a view to deportation to America, most of these, as already noted, left the prison boat enroute, and remained among their co-religionists in the Palatinate; as did also some fifty of the refugees exiled from the same place two years later. Three hundred and forty of these latter, it will be remembered, mostly of the Amish wing of the church, continued down the river to Amsterdam and later found homes near Groningen in north Holland. These exiles are described by a contemporary Mennonite writer who had seen them as they entered the Palatinate as a

“sturdy folk by nature, who could endure hardships, with long untrimmed beards, with plain clothes, and heavy shoes shod with strong iron nails. They were very zealous in serving God with prayer, reading and other ways. We could speak with them only with difficulty; for they had lived in the mountains of Switzerland far from villages and towns and had little communication with other people.”

For the next quarter of a century these Swiss Mennonites in the Palatinate, in spite of wars, cold summers, crop failures, and constant emigration to America must have grown and prospered; for from records preserved in the government archives in Karlsruhe we learn that by 1732 there were six hundred and eighteen families on the two sides of the upper Rhine, a total population of approximately three thousand. Among the congregations mentioned which still exist may be included *Ibernheim*, *Sembach*, *Friedelsheim*, *Weirhof*, *Griesheim*, now *Monsheim*, *Obersuelzen*, *Hasselbach*, etc. All of these were small farm communities, either on noble estates

or small villages, hence the "heims" and "hofs." Several, *Ibersheim* and *Weirhof*, were solidly Mennonite. The latter still is.

Continued War Devastations

In all the numerous wars of the eighteenth century between France and her enemies of central Europe the rich fields of the Palatinate remained an attractive prize for the armies of both sides as they marched back and forth from one country to another. Hans Burghalter of Geroldsheim, for many years the spokesman of the Palatine Mennonites before their brethren in Holland when asking for help, in a letter written in 1746 complained that

"for five years the French troops have overrun our land, confiscated our property and oppressed us with heavy burdens. They consoled us by promising that everything would be paid for, but so far not a stuiver has been received. Besides this we were forced to work for them at hard labor for days at a time. After this the English army came, encamping only two hours distant from us for four long weeks, during which we were subjected to the same harsh treatment. After the English left us to establish their headquarters at Weyer, the Austrians encamped twice among us. So you can see what unbearable suffering we had to endure the past summer. Hardly had this great burden been lifted from us than the good Lord permitted another severe punishment to befall us. A contagious disease spread among our cattle, so that many of the brethren have not a single head left. Our poverty is so great that many of us do not know how to help ourselves any longer."

Religious and Economic Restrictions

But poverty and war were not the only burdens with which the Mennonites were afflicted during the century. To these was added a long period of religious intolerance. Under Karl Ludwig and his immediate successors they

had enjoyed a fair degree of religious liberty as we saw. But with the coming into power of a new Catholic line of electors, and after the waste places of the electorate had again been repeopled, toleration ceased. In fact under these Catholic electors even the rights of the Reformed, who made up by far the largest part of the population, and of the Lutherans, also, were greatly curtailed; for according to the terms of the treaty of 1648 the religion of a country was to be determined by its ruler. Especially intolerant were the electors of the latter part of the century who had fallen under the influence largely of the bigoted order of Jesuits.

The Mennonites, left without any religious rights whatsoever under the above treaty, were marked for special oppression. Throughout the eighteenth century they were forced to pay tribute money for such toleration as they enjoyed. They were denied residence in the cities, they could not engage in trade, nor were their children admitted to apprenticeship in the trade guilds. Even the Jews, then commonly despised throughout Europe, they said, were held in higher esteem than the Mennonites; for the Jews by paying a certain amount of money could engage in trade publicly, a privilege granted Mennonites under no condition.

Beginning with 1717, under Karl Philip, a more determined effort was inaugurated to prevent the further spread of the Mennonite population throughout the Palatinate. First it was ordered that the Mennonites must be limited to two hundred families, which evidently was thought to be the number at the time, though in reality there were many more. Numerous regulations were passed during the century to keep the population within this minimum. The exemption and protection money was doubled. The marriage of young people was made extremely difficult, being permitted only with the con-

sent of the central government. Hans Burghalter, writing to his friend Johannes Deknatel in Amsterdam in 1747, complains that when the head of a family dies it is difficult for a son to take his place, and the recognition of a new head is made possible only upon the payment of a considerable sum of money. First he must obtain permission of the local bailiff to fill the position, and then he is turned over from one official to another all the way up to the elector himself and then back again to the church officials, all of whom must give their consent, "all the time" Burghalter says, "with their hands in their pockets," which costs both time and money. Often the greater part of a year passes before permission is secured. He fears that if matters can not be remedied there will be "a great falling off in the congregations of the young people."

The acquisition of land was made difficult and uncertain by the revival of an ancient right called *Ius Retractus* which stipulated that land which had once been in the possession of a member of one of the three tolerated religions, and in the meantime had been bought by a Mennonite, could at any time later again be reclaimed by the original owner upon the payment of the first purchase price. Frequently an industrious Mennonite, who had bought a worthless farm and then by years of toil had improved it and brought it to a high degree of productivity was forced to turn it back at the first price to some envious neighbor of the established religion, with little or no reward for his years of effort.

Growth by propaganda, of course, was strictly out of the question. As late as 1780 two young girls of Amish-Mennonite parentage, who as orphans had been forcibly taken into a Catholic institution where they had been turned into Catholics, but in later years had again of their own free choice joined the church of their parents,

were declared by the Catholic section of the Senate of the University of Heidelberg, to whom the case had been submitted for legal opinion, to be worthy of death for having left the Catholic church for the Mennonite. The Elector, however, commuted the sentence to one year of imprisonment and exile. As for the elder who had baptized them, Hans Nafziger of Essingen, his offence was declared to be even greater than that of the two girls. But his penalty was only a fine of five hundred florin with exile.

As a climax to these religious restrictions upon the living there was added this humiliating treatment of the dead—denial of burial rights in the public cemeteries. In the year above mentioned a Mennonite in Kaiserslautern had been buried in the common burial ground without the knowledge evidently of the local priest, who was absent at the time. At any rate, when the priest heard of the burial, together with the local police, he dug up the body and buried it just outside the cemetery walls in order to show the Mennonites, as one chronicler intimates, what the public thought of those not of the tolerated churches. All this, it will be noted, on the very eve of the French Revolution.

American Emigration

Of course in these economic privations and religious restrictions are to be found the chief source of the continued migration during the eighteenth century from the Palatinate to what was regarded as the "Paradise of Pennsylvania." The economic causes were shared by the Reformed and Lutherans also, but the religious oppression gave the Mennonites added reasons for leaving. Thousands upon thousands of Palatinates of all faiths left their native land for America during the century. Of these the Mennonites formed but a very small part; but in proportion to their relative strength at home they

greatly exceeded the others in numbers. The immigrant flow continued throughout the century, being broken only by the various European wars of the period, and being largest just before actual hostilities began, and immediately after they closed. Up to 1727, the Mennonites led the way; after that they were greatly outnumbered by the other groups. All told, during the century, perhaps less than three thousand Palatine Mennonites left for Pennsylvania. By 1800 that happened to be about the Mennonite population also remaining in the home land.

During all this period the Palatine Mennonites, as noted in an earlier chapter, were given liberal support by the Dutch brethren in all their needs. In 1703 a committee, the Commission for Foreign Needs, which had been organized in the latter part of the seventeenth century to help the Swiss exiles of that time, was revived for the purpose of helping their poverty stricken descendants in the Palatinate, as well as their persecuted brethren in Bern. This commission, first organized to relieve distress, in south Germany and Switzerland, refused to sanction the migration movement, and repeatedly warned the Palatine elders to discourage the Pennsylvania fever. But when poverty stricken Mennonites appeared at Amsterdam or Rotterdam begging to be sent to the land of promise, the commission forgot its warning, and furnished the necessary means. The organization was officially closed in 1732, but continued to function unofficially long after that.

Toleration Granted

The French Revolution affected the Mennonites of south Germany as it did every one else. The levelling spirit which brushed aside so many of the social and political class distinctions of an earlier day also put an end to religious intolerance. After the Napoleonic wars

Mennonites were no longer regarded as merely a tolerated people, subject to the whims and caprices of bigoted rulers. They were accorded the same rights as those enjoyed by the preferred churches.

The Ibersheim Conference

But their improved civil and religious status was not due altogether to the more tolerant spirit of their former persecutors, both state and church. The Mennonites, too, had changed. They met their oppressors half way. It was perhaps for the purpose of stemming the rising tide of worldliness among the younger people, and of strengthening the bonds of unity among them that two of the leading elders, Valentin Dahlem of Wiesbaden, and Peter Weber of Nieuwied called a conference of the Palatine churches at Ibersheim, near Worms, in 1803. So far as the elders were concerned it was evident that at this meeting they still stood for the old faith and practises. According to the regulations passed, young men who joined the army were to be excommunicated. Mixed marriages were still forbidden, and church discipline was to be encouraged by means of the *Umfrage*.¹ Ministers must be selected by lot, and serve without pay. Religion and Godliness were still synonymous terms. Drunkenness, gambling, swearing, the age old vices of mankind, were disciplined, as were theatre attendance and dancing; vanity and pride as shown particularly in dress and everyday conduct was discouraged. The sisters must appear at the communion table with covered heads. Church membership must be based on genuine conversion, and not as in the state church be a matter of mere form;

1 It was customary among the ancient Mennonites and Amish to send out certain church officials just before the observance of communion to inquire of the various members whether they were in sufficient harmony with one another, to observe the communion service in perfect unity.

applicants for baptism must pass through a period of thorough instruction, and children could not be admitted under a minimum age of fourteen.

Among the constructive acts of this conference was the commissioning of Valentin Dahlem to draw up a book of formulas for the use of the ministry, a very convenient help especially for uneducated farmer preachers; for it contained formulas for all ceremonial occasions, as well as written prayers for every contingency. It was already difficult to secure needed ministers to carry on the work of the church, and no doubt this book was designed to lighten their burden. It was printed in 1807 and went through several later editions. It was popular everywhere in the south German churches throughout the century, and was not unused among the later emigrants in America.

Some of the rules above mentioned were more easily made than enforced. It was difficult to excommunicate the young men whom Napoleon forced against their will into the army. When the left bank of the Rhine fell to France in 1801, Mennonites gained full civil rights, but lost their military exemption. But if they had the money they might hire substitutes. It is said that in the Russian campaign of 1812 nearly every Mennonite family was represented. In Bavaria and other south German states, too, at this time and for some years later substitutes were allowed. The church leaders were strenuous in their endeavors to stem the tide of militarism. At first they petitioned Napoleon for the retention of their ancient privileges; and then failing in this, they encouraged the practise of hiring substitutes. For a time the churches as a whole collected money for all the young men drafted into service. But this method of meeting the situation was not popular with such families as had no sons liable to service. Finally each family had to look out for itself.

The rich and the liberal minded found an easy way out. The poor, and conservative could only emigrate to America. Between 1830 and 1860 there was a continued migration of both the poor and the conscientious, both individuals and groups from all the Mennonite settlements of south Germany, the Palatinate, Bavaria, and Hesse, principally to Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. By 1868 the south German Mennonites had few scruples against military service.

In spite of conference regulations to the contrary, too, men unqualified for the ministry refused to serve when chosen by the lot. To remedy the lack of efficient and willing preachers, some of the more progressive congregations, beginning with Monsheim in 1819, imported trained ministers from the outside, and paid them a salary. Sempach followed in 1832, and Ibersheim in 1843, until most of the congregations were supplied. The first of these new ministers came from the Mennonite communities of north Germany and Holland, but later the native churches were able to supply a number of young men, most of whom had taken a short course of Bible study in a Mission school in Basel.

Missions and Schools

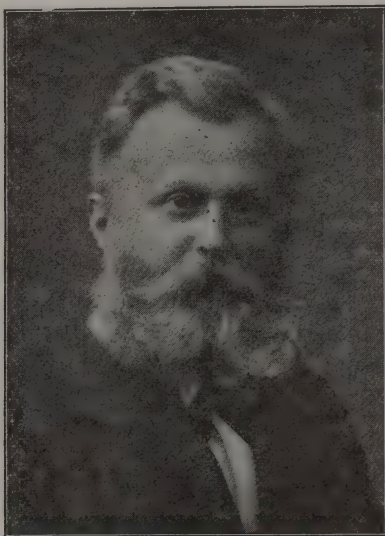
At the same time the churches became interested in the cause of foreign missions, largely through the efforts of the eloquent preaching of an English Baptist from London, who had visited the various congregations and had attended the Spitalhof conference of 1824. Tauchnitz, the famous Leipzig publisher, who had become interested in the south German Mennonites, had also urged the mission cause among them. At this conference it was suggested that each congregation place a mission box beside the charity box near the church door. For a time the contributions went to the English Baptist society, but

later they were diverted to various other organizations as well as to the work of the Dutch Mennonites in the East Indies.

With the coming of an educated ministry there developed also a keener interest in the educational needs of the young people in general. The elementary village schools of the day were not of a high order. Of religious instruction for Mennonite children there was none except such as they received in their homes. Sometimes in a "hof" where the population was solidly Mennonite, or in communities where a sufficient number of Mennonite children were available, an educated pastor might also become the village teacher, or start a private school for the children of his own church.

One such pastor-teacher was Michael Loewenberg, who founded a school at Weirhof in 1848. It was Loewenberg, too, who first saw the need of a training school for the new ministry, if the church was to have an educated leadership. To supply this need he formed an association of fifty men, who in 1867 founded the school since known as the Weirhof *Real und Erziehungs Anstalt*. The original purpose of the institution was never realized, although it has had a continuous growth as an ordinary secondary boarding school. In 1874 at the time of the death of the founder, it had thirty students enrolled and a heavy debt. After passing through several changes it finally assumed, in 1884, the character of a first class *Real schule* with state approval under the capable direction of Dr. Ernest Gobel, who has continued its head until just recently. The school now has a number of finely equipped buildings and laboratories. Although no longer a distinctively Mennonite institution it maintained, until recently, the wholesome religious character of its early days. Of the two hundred and forty students enrolled in 1930, only twelve were Mennonites, the rest were mostly Protestants

with a few Catholics. Dr. Christian Neff of the local Weirhof congregation remained for many years the religious instructor of the Mennonite contingent of the student body.²



Dr. CHRISTIAN NEFF

Among other educational and publication ventures of the south Germans was the publishing in 1780, at Pirmasens of the *Martyr's Mirror*, from the American Ephrata edition of 1748; and a number of hymn books and catechisms new and old during the nineteenth century. In 1869 *Das Gemeindeblatt*, now the official organ of the south German churches, was founded by Ulrich Hege of Baden. Since 1892 there has appeared also the *Christlicher Gemeinde-Kalender* full of historical interest

² This school has since been taken over by the Nazis and has completely lost its original character and objective. Whether a Mennonite minister still ministers to the spiritual needs of the Mennonite students is unknown to the writer.

and statistical information. The most ambitious and promising literary undertaking in all Mennonite history since the original appearance of the *Martyr's Mirror* in Holland in 1660, is the *Mennonitisches Lexicon* which beginning in 1913, is now about two-thirds completed. The editors and publishers, Dr. Christian Neff of Weirhof, and Christian Hege, the latter until recently, on the staff of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* deserve great credit for the painstaking effort they have put into this work during a very trying time in German history.

A Rural People

The south German Mennonites, have remained from the beginning almost entirely a rural people, devoted to the management of large estates of the nobility or to small farming. For that reason they did not play a conspicuous role in the political and industrial life of their day. The first city church was organized in Kaiserslautern in 1886; a second in Munich in 1892; and several others since. As farmers they were eminently successful, however, and upheld the traditional integrity and high reputation held by Mennonite farmers the world over. In the middle of the eighteenth century, at a time when scientific agriculture was still unknown, David Moellinger of Monsheim, by introducing the principle of rotation of crops on his farm, and use of clovers in place of fallowing, selective stock breeding, and other improved methods of agriculture now everywhere practised, became known as the father of Palatine agriculture. Moellinger had many worthy followers among the Mennonite farmers of the nineteenth century, foremost of whom was perhaps Christian Detweiler of Kindesheim.

Although their contribution to the general political life of their times was not conspicuous, yet several Mennonites after the granting of equal civil rights occupied

positions of trust in their respective governments. Peter Eyman of Frankenstein was first to serve in the Bavarian Legislature in 1849. He was followed by others in other states. Jacob Finger, a life long and loyal member of the Monsheim congregation, served the Grand Duchy of Hesse both in the Legislature, and for some years in various positions in the Cabinet.

Religious Leaders

Among the men not already mentioned who served the Mennonite cause itself most effectively since 1830, should be mentioned Jacob Ellenberger, first of the new type of educated ministers to start a private Mennonite school for his congregation at Friedelsheim; Jacob Ellenberger II, a nephew of the above, pastor of numerous congregations in his day—Ibersheim, Eichstock and Friedelsheim—and author of a well-known booklet *Bilder aus dem Pilgerleben*; Johannes Mollenaar (1810-1868) of Dutch birth, but elder for many years at Monsheim, and promoter of conferences, hymnbooks and catechisms and other good causes; and his contemporaries, Johannes Risser of Sempach, and Johannes J. Krehbiel, member of an ancient and influential Weirhof family. Christian Schmutz, elder for many years at Rappenu, who died in 1873, may well be called the last of the old guard; although in the main favorable to all progressive movements of the new order, he retained to the end his early prejudices against an educated ministry and especially against the missionary enterprise of the liberal Dutch churches. The late minister of Sempach, Matthias Pohl, was interested in historical subjects, and a liberal contributor to all German Mennonite periodicals.

In the meantime the region spoken of here as the Palatinate has undergone numerous political changes since 1648; and a number of small Mennonite colonies,

have left the mother churches for other locations in south Germany. And so the various settlements above described now find themselves under the political jurisdiction of a number of different states—Rheinpfalz, Württemberg, Hesse, Baden and old Bavaria.

Among the Daughter colonies are several that left the Palatinate, Alsace and Baden for

OLD BAVARIA

In 1802 King Max Joseph IV, somewhat liberalized by the democratic spirit of the French Revolution, and desirous of finding industrious farmers for his Danubian swamp and brush lands, offered liberal terms of settlement to all prospective colonists. About one hundred Palatine farmers responded to this invitation, including eight Mennonite families, who no doubt were induced to make the change in order to improve their economic condition. These latter located along the Danube near Neuberg. Others followed, and by 1850, they numbered over twenty-five families. By dint of much hard work and at considerable sacrifice, they developed in course of time a number of prosperous farms where before there had been nothing but waste land. Their farm homes they grouped together in a village which they called *Maxweiler*, in honor of their benefactor. In 1832, with the personal support of the reigning king, they built a combination school and church house. But their own poorly taught, private school was not supplied with an efficient and approved government teacher until 1849. In the early fifties nearly the entire congregation migrated to America, locating first in southeastern Iowa, but later on the plains of central Kansas.

In 1818 another settlement called *Eichstock* was begun, some twenty-five miles south of Maxweiler. This

congregation, too, which by the middle of the century had increased to some thirty-five families, migrated almost enmasse to America with their Maxweiler brethren with whom they had been closely affiliated from the beginning.

About the same time, too, a number of Amish farmers from the Palatinate and Alsace had rented large estates in the general region of Munich and *Donauworth*. These had little religious affiliation with the Mennonite congregations near by, and maintained for a long time their distinctive Amish customs and practises.

Some time earlier, in the preceding century, a group of Mennonites from Baden had founded a congregation near *Wurzburg*.

Many of these early congregations have since disappeared, to be replaced by others in near by regions, and in several of the large cities of south Bavaria, Munich, Augsburg, Regensburg, and Ingoldstadt.

The Catholic Bavarian kings were quite generous toward these heterodox, industrious farmers, granting them complete religious liberty. Not quite; while they might build their own church houses, these must be without bell and tower. Nor could the preacher wear the clerical garb, or bear the title *Pfarrer*. That must remain the special privilege of the state clergyman.

GALICIA

Galicia,³ of course, is not a part of south Germany, but the Galician Mennonites are all south Germans. Among the thousands of Germans who answered the call of the Austrian emperor, Joseph II, at the close of the eighteenth century for industrious colonists to settle his newly acquired Polish territory were twenty-eight Men-

3 This region was added to Poland after the World War.

nonite families, mostly from the Palatinate, though a few may have come from Alsace and other neighboring regions.

These Mennonites located, in 1784, in three colonies near *Lemberg*. The terms offered by Joseph were quite liberal—free land, a brief period of tax exemption, a temporary loan for stocking their farms, military exemption, and religious liberty. Of course they were all poor or they would not have exchanged their well-established homes in the Palatinate for the uncertainties of a pioneer experiment. Unfortunately the group was not one-minded religiously. Assembled from various sections of the old established communities, they found themselves an unmixable mixture of both Amish and Mennonites, who thus far had not yet learned to live together in religious harmony. The Amish contingent, about ten families, left for Russia before the close of the century, settling down finally in the province of *Volhynia*. Later, in the seventies of the past century, these latter joined the Russian trek to America, locating in Kansas and South Dakota. Those who remained in Galicia prospered, and at the close of the first hundred years had grown to nearly one hundred and fifty families. About this time, in the early eighties of the past century, approximately half of these, the surplus and poorer half, for economic reasons, also migrated to America.

In the matter of military exemptions, Austria was inclined to follow the example of Prussia. After 1868 Mennonites in Galicia were permitted to accept non-combatant, instead of active service. During the recent war about three-fourths of the Mennonite young men in the army were thus engaged. *Lemberg*, being well within the fighting zone of the eastern front suffered heavily from war ravages.

The present Mennonite population in this region is about six hundred, scattered throughout one hundred villages and estates, miles apart, making anything like close co-operation extremely difficult. Services are held alternately throughout the territory in several different church houses and private homes. For some years, before and after the late war, the congregation (for in spite of its scattered membership and its different meeting places the group forms but one congregation with its center in Lemberg) was served as elder by Heinrich Pauls, a progressive and forward looking church leader. The present minister is Arnold Bachman, who with several assistants, looks after the pastoral needs of the widely scattered flock. Naturally the spiritual horizon of the future is not bright. The language of the pulpit is still German, though on funeral occasions where native Poles and Ruthenians are likely to be present, the common language of the land, Polish, is sometimes pressed into service.

ALSACE-LORRAINE AND FRANCE

The present Mennonite settlements within the regions mentioned in the above titles are also of Swiss origin; and religiously and culturally, even though they have not always lived under the same political jurisdictions, many have enjoyed, up to within recent years, at least, a common heritage, including the German language, with their Swiss and south German brethren, and may as well be treated as a single religious group. Of the early Anabaptist congregations in and about Strasburg it is not likely that many of them survived the persecuting zeal of the sixteenth century. But Swiss refugees from both Bern and Zurich found their way into the secluded valleys of the Vosges mountains, and especially by invita-

tion of the prince of Rappolstein into the region of St. Marie aux Mines even earlier than into the Palatinate. By 1660 when the Alsatian Mennonites met at Ohnenheim to adopt the conservative Dordrecht confession of faith as the best expression of their doctrinal beliefs, delegates were present from the above mentioned settlement which had its nucleus at Markirch, and ten other localities along the Rhine, principally between Colmar and Selestat. That these different localities, nearly all villages from which the delegates came, and which lay very close together, represented as many congregations, or even settlements, is of course not likely; although the list of signers included six ministers and seven elders.

Alsace received her share of the Bernese exiles of 1671, as well as those of the early eighteenth century. Van Braght says that in 1672 one hundred of the Swiss immigrants of the year before were still in Alsace. Unfortunately a little later this territory fell into the hands of the French king, Louis XIV.

Order for Exile

Fearing, no doubt, a further influx of Swiss exiles, and urged on by jealous neighbors and intolerant priests, Louis requested the Intendant of Alsace, in 1712, to order all Mennonites out of his new acquisition. Those who obeyed the order left for the duchy of Zweibruecken in the Palatinate, and for the county of Montbeliard, and Lorraine especially in the Saar valley, neither of the latter two having as yet been politically united with France. Through the intervention of local princes who valued highly the industrious Mennonite renters on their estates, Louis XV, in 1728, modified somewhat the harsh measures of his predecessor, demanding only that the number of Mennonites still in France should not be increased.

In the Time of the Revolution

By the time of the great Revolution both Lorraine and Montbeliard^{3a} had become incorporated into the French monarchy; but by this time, too, Mennonites had been accorded most of the religious rights of other people. Such religious and civil disabilities as were still in force were shortly removed by the great drive for liberty, fraternity and equality. In 1793 they were even given special consideration for their scruples against war. In an order issued by the Committee of Public Safety which contained among other names that of Robespierre it was recommended that the Mennonites be treated with the same spirit of gentleness which they themselves exercised toward others, and that they be permitted to substitute for regular army service work of a non-combatant nature, or even to be exempt entirely upon the payment of a money equivalent.

Later on under the Napoleonic levees those opposing or desirous of avoiding military service, whether Mennonite or not were permitted to furnish substitutes, a difficult alternative especially near the end when almost all the available man power of France had been used up by the long and exhaustive military campaigns. As elsewhere in middle Europe, the Mennonites of France were weaned away from their opposition to war by inability of the poor to hire substitutes, by military training in times of peace, popular pressure against non-participation in a common cause, and the growing nationalism of the period. The more conservative here, too, left for America during the early part of the century. By 1870 there were not many young men who refused service; and today non-resistance in France is a dead letter among the Mennonites.

^{3a} Alsace in 1681; Lorraine 1766, and Montbeliard somewhat later.

The French Mennonites, including those in former Alsace-Lorraine, are practically all of the Amish branch of the church. Jacob Amman who took up his residence in Alsace early in the history of the Amish controversy, if indeed he did not begin it there, seemingly made a clean sweep of the Alsatian church for his cause; and from here, of course, it was later carried by Alsatian immigrants to other parts of France. The Dordrecht confession which had been officially adopted by the Alsations, and perhaps not by all of the Swiss and the Palatines, demanded a rigid observance of the practice of shunning, which formed the chief issue, it will be remembered, of the Reist-Amman controversy. By insisting upon the observance of this practise, of course, Amman was merely asking that the church conform its practise to the accepted and official Dordrecht confession of faith.

THE AMISH

At this point it may be well to say a few words about the Amish branch of the church; for it will be remembered that this division was carried into all the regions that were settled by the Swiss refugees during the latter part of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth—the Palatinate, the Swiss Jura, Bavaria, Hesse as well as Alsace and other neighboring French possessions. Both branches of the church were included in the experiences thus far mentioned. That the second generation of Amish were no less inclined to hold themselves aloof from their Mennonite brethren and neighbors, where the two lived in the same regions, than were their fathers, is shown in a letter written in 1742 by Hans Burghalter of Geroldshausen, in the Palatinate to the Dutch relief committee in Rotterdam. Burghalter reports that in the Upper Palatinate many of the “so-called Amisch” desire to go to “Pencelfania.” These, he says:

"have no fellowship with us at all except when they get into trouble and have need of help, then they come to us, but never at any other time. They even try to belittle us and bring us into disrepute with the authorities. They count themselves the *Fine Manisten*, but at that I think they are pretty coarse.⁴ I do not wish to despise or belittle any one though."

It was about this time that many of the Amish migrated to America from all these regions, but especially from the Palatinate, in spite of the discouraging advice of Hans Burghalter and the Dutch committee. All told perhaps about five hundred of them, children included, found their way by the middle of the century to the fertile fields and peaceful red hills of southeastern Pennsylvania.

Conference at Essingen, 1779

Not much is known about the religious life of the European Amish during this period except such stray facts as have found their way into church conference records and church letters religiously preserved in manuscript and copied from one generation to another by church officials. None of these records ever got into print. The best known of these periodic conferences was the one held in 1779, at Essingen, near Landau, then under French jurisdiction, but now a part of Germany. Nineteen Amish church congregations, and thirty-nine ministers from all the settlements in France and southwestern Germany were represented at the meeting. Among the items under consideration were the adoption of the Strasburg resolutions of 1568, mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, and the doctrines and practises considered of special importance by the Amish since the division of

4 The Mennonites in Holland, at this time, were sometimes classified into the "Fine," or Conservative Mennonites, and the "Coarse," or Liberal.

1693. The "long" confession of faith of thirty-three articles found in the Martyr's Mirror was specifically recommended as being in harmony with the "word of God," largely no doubt because of its emphasis upon the practise of shunning and feet-washing. Extravagance in dress continued to be denounced. Among the worldly fashions especially tabooed were four cornered neck scarfs, high heeled boots and shoes, shaving, combing the hair and trimming the beard according to the prevailing fashions. The prohibition of smoking and snuffing of tobacco, which was confirmed here, had been referred to in an earlier conference of 1752 as a new practise at that time. Hooks and eyes of course were taken for granted, and needed no further mention.

Marriage Customs

A letter written in 1781 by an Amish bishop at Es-singen, Hans Nafziger, to the Amish churches in Holland describes some of the religious practises among the south German brethren at that time. Especially interesting were the wedding customs then prevailing. Marriage must be "in the Lord," and with the consent of the parents and the knowledge of the elders of the church. Some time before the wedding the prospective bridegroom must send the deacon to the home of the bride-to-be for her answer to his proposal, an answer which both the suitor and the deacon knew beforehand of course would be favorable. The wedding ceremony was preceded by a long drawn out sermon of several hours, in which sometimes several ministers participated, and consisted largely of a detailed recital of favorite wedding scenes from the Bible, including always the story of Apocryphal Tobias and Sara. Never omitted in the instructions to the bridal pair by the elder was the admonition to follow the example of Tobias and Sara in postponing the enjoyment

of the conjugal relations until three days after the wedding ceremony.⁵

End of the Amish Division

These original Amish congregations retained their separate religious organization and many of their distinctive religious practises, chief of which were foot-washing and the *meidung* until well toward the beginning of the twentieth century. It was not until the early seventies of the past century that serious suggestions were first made for a union of the two branches of the church where the two existed side by side. Although these first suggestions, which seemingly came from the Mennonite side, were without result, some twenty years later various Amish congregations in south Germany began to affiliate themselves with the Conference of the South German Mennonites; in 1937 the last of the Amish congregations in this area, the *Ixheimer* church in Zweibruecken, joined the *Ernstweiler* Mennonite congregation, thus finally ending a long and bitter division begun by Jacob Amman some two hundred years ago. The French churches being solidly Amish, and forming a separate conference district, had no occasion for any organic union. Today, although, perhaps, still a bit more conservative in faith and practise than their former German Amish brethren or Mennonites, yet such distinctive religious beliefs and practises as once divided them have largely disappeared. The term Amish as a distinct denominational name has disappeared from among the European Mennonites.

As They Appear in the Nineteenth Century

The French Amish Mennonites made little progress during the nineteenth century. A contemporary writer

⁵ This practice was still in vogue among the Amish of central Illinois as late as the past generation, and perhaps among the Old Order Amish to the present day.

for a French journal in 1819, himself not a Mennonite, speaks of them as they lived just about the time they began their migration to America as follows:

"The entire number of souls may be twelve or fifteen hundred scattered about through German Lotharingia, Elsass and the neighboring Departments. Their principal settlement is at Salm, near the Vosges which they occupy almost exclusively. I do not think that there is a single family living in any of the towns. They are small farmers being found especially as tenants on the estates of noblemen. Through their industry, intelligence, and experience as farmers they have become expert in all lines of agricultural industry. This circumstance as well as their reliability and punctuality in meeting all their financial obligations have made them much sought after by noblemen as farmers on their estates."

"They consented with reluctance to carry the tricolor cockade when that was made a duty. When they greet one they take off their hats, but like the Quakers they do not take an oath nor bear arms. When the National Convention attempted to compel them to perform military duty they refused, but suggested that they be permitted to work in the Quartermaster department instead, which was granted them by the Committee of Public Safety. Some of them served in this capacity rather than hire substitutes. To their credit be it said that, unlike many others, they pay their debts, not in worthless assignats, but in good coin. They do not use tobacco, nor play cards. To music they are strangers. They do not go to law. They take care of their poor and come to the rescue of their members who have financial reverses for which they were not responsible personally. On the whole they are rather illiterate, but honest, temperate, industrious and of good moral character."

The French Remnant

It was about this time, especially from about 1830 to 1860, that there was a heavy emigration of French Mennonites to America. The large Amish congregations in central Illinois and northwestern Ohio are almost of pure

Alsatian and Lotharingian origin. In addition to the loss to America there was also a constant migration of individual families from Alsace and Lorraine farther into the interior of France. These latter, farmers and millers, locating on widely separated estates and mills, found it difficult to maintain an organized church life. The insistence also upon maintaining the German language in public worship against a rather hostile French Catholic opinion did not make their task any the easier. The separation of the larger and more compact Alsatian communities from the newer and more isolated French congregations in 1870 only made the existence of the latter still more precarious.

Since 1870 there have been several praiseworthy attempts to quicken the spiritual life and the social ideals of the French section of the church. One of these was the founding of a school in the above year at Etupes, near Montbeliard for the special purpose of teaching the children in the official language of the church, German. The promoter was a certain Isaac Rich who had been a student for a brief period at the Wadsworth, Ohio school then just started. It was here, no doubt, that Rich got both his inspiration and his educational ideals; for he modelled his institution quite largely after that of Wadsworth. The French Mennonites, however, were not greatly interested in the education of their young people at this time. With the exception of a little help from the Palatinate, and good wishes from America, this educational venture had to be supported at first almost entirely by Rich and his immediate family. Changing his Mennonite school after a few years of struggle into a non-denominational children's home, he soon built up a rather thriving institution, well supported both by Mennonites and non-Mennonites within and without his immediate circle. But unfortunately, the founder could not stand prosperity. The in-

stitution came to an inglorious end in 1876, when Rich after a moral lapse, was sentenced by the French government to its penal colony in South America, where he died a few years later, some say in remorse for his sins.⁶

Renewed Life

After this the French remnant seemingly continued to decline both numerically and spiritually. As late as 1905, Pierre Sommer, one of the leading preachers among the French says⁷ that at that time there were eleven small and scattered congregations divided into two groups. One of the four congregations near the Swiss border, using the German language for the most part in their services, meeting in their own meeting houses every two weeks; and another group of seven congregations in French Lorraine, using the French language, so widely scattered that they met for worship only once in every four weeks in private homes. Worship, preacher Sommer says, was formal, the preachers being uneducated and unpaid. Sermons were dull and frequently a repetition of what the congregation had often heard before. Singing, confined largely to a few of the older members, was from the old Ausbund. Young people were admitted to church after a period of catechetical instruction and memorizing of the Dordrecht confession, which few of them were able to understand.

Among the causes given for this numerical and spiritual decline were those just mentioned, the isolation of the congregations and widely scattered membership in a solidly French Catholic environment, the attempt on the

6 It may not be without interest to observe that the three pioneer schools of higher learning in America, Germany and France respectively, Wadsworth, Weirhof or Donnersberg, and Etupes all started about the same time 1867, 1868, and 1870.

7 *Bundesbote Kalendar*, 1905.

part of the older people to keep up the German language in worship long after the young people had forgotten its use, and in addition the lack of proper school facilities, mixed marriages, and lack of organized church life. The founding of a series of conferences among these French congregations in 1901, and the issuing of a church paper, *Christ Seul*, in the French language in 1906, and a traveling evangelist or field secretary some time later, all these contributed materially toward the awakening of a renewed interest in their common religious enterprise. In 1908 the church organized itself into the *Association des Eglises Evangeliques-Mennonites de langue Francaise*.

The Alsatian-Lotharingians

The Alsatian-Lotharingian congregations, on the other hand, after the separation of 1870, speaking the German language, and in closer contact with their more progressive south German brethren, although they made little growth numerically, yet maintained a more vigorous and healthy religious life than did their fellow believers on the French side of the boundary line. They, too, organized themselves into a conference unit in 1897. Until his recent death one of the leaders of these churches was Valentine Pelsy.

The French Mennonites Again Reunited

As a result of the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France in 1918 and the reunion of the two former separated Mennonite groups, the French language no doubt will be substituted for the former German throughout all these churches, which will again become one ecclesiastical body, to the great advantage of the old French group, but to the loss at the same time of the Alsatian; for with the adoption of the French language, the latter automatically

cut themselves off from all the traditional culture and the doctrinal literature of the past which has been German, as well as from the main currents of German Mennonitism of today. The French group is hardly large enough to maintain either a literature or culture of its own. As a matter of fact it is a question whether in spite of the spiritual awakening of recent years it will be possible for the French Mennonites to keep up for any great length of time their independent existence in the future.^{7a}

Since the world war they have had little affiliation with the common tasks of the rest of the European Mennonites. They had no direct representative at the Mennonite congress at Amsterdam in 1936.

Today the French Amish-Mennonites, both in the former Alsace-Lorraine as well as in the other Departments, are still in the main a country people though more and more they are drifting into the cities. They are still noted, as they always have been, for their industry and sobriety and for their philanthropy and generosity. Sometimes they are imposed upon. An observation of their kindness to the poor and needy, made some years ago by a local writer is still just as true today. "Homeless beggars and wandering ne'er do wells" says this writer, "knew far and wide the regions where Mennonites lived. These knights of the road always knew that here they would be assured of a warm nook in the stable for the night, and the good housewife, too, was certain not to withhold a bit of hot soup from the hungry stomach."⁸ Although the preachers for the most part remain uneducated and unpaid, there are signs that indicate the passing of the old order. Some of the younger ministers are beginning to spend a few months or even years in

7a The peace treaty at the end of the present war undoubtedly will again restore Alsace-Lorraine to Germany.

8 This commentary might be equally well made of the Mennonites of America.

the nearby Bible schools in Basel and elsewhere in preparation for their religious work. Those without special training for the ministry are nevertheless often men of more than ordinary ability in other lines. Several years ago in the course of a visit to the Colmar church the writer found one of the young preachers of that congregation to be the superintendent of a large textile mill, and another, ordained that day, the chief government forester of that district. Hooks and eyes, of course, are gone, as are also most of the strict rules of discipline and practises once prevalent among the Amish, save foot-washing which is still quite commonly practised.

In numbers the whole reunited French church includes a total population of a little more than three thousand souls, about two-thirds of whom live in Alsace and Lorraine, and the remainder farther in the French interior. There is also a small congregation in Luxemburg. Such names as *Roth*, *Lugbill*, *Joder*, *Widmer*, *Schmouker*, *Sommer*, *Lidwiller*, *Moziman*, *Wagler*, *Neuhusser*, *Jordy*, *Pelsy*, *Nafziger*, and *Schertz* indicate the German Swiss origin of the French Mennonites.

SUMMARY

A few words should be said here of the Mennonites as a whole in old Germany, for with the exception of a few congregations in old France and one in Galicia the settlements mentioned in the last two chapters were all included in pre-war Germany.

In spite of a common language and common religious traditions the four settlements, Northwestern Germany, the Vistula-Nogat delta, the Palatinate and Upper Rhine, and Alsace-Lorraine all formed separate ecclesiastical units and conference districts, with but little religious fellowship one with another. The congregations of the

northwest, more or less closely allied with their Dutch brethren, were the most liberal in their doctrines and practises; those of Alsace-Lorraine the most conservative. The south Germans were never in thorough spiritual accord with their Vistula brethren. The country churches, with their untrained and unsalaried preachers, remained more or less suspicious of the more progressive city congregations under theologically trained leadership. The *Mennonitische Blaetter*, the more progressive of the two church periodicals, was widely read in the north while the *Gemeindeblatt* was little known beyond the confines of the southern churches. As late as 1926 an attempt to merge the two papers failed. Although these various groups have formed themselves into conference districts, yet in policy the churches are still strictly congregational.

The Union of the Mennonites of the German Reich

For the purpose of bringing about a closer cooperation among the different groups several of the more progressive church leaders organized in Berlin in 1886 what became known as the *Union of Mennonites of the German Reich*, a federation modelled largely upon the Dutch A. D. S. The objectives of this union were stated at the first meeting—to provide for travelling evangelists, to encourage worthy students for the ministry, to aid underpaid ministers and to promote the cause of Mennonite literature. This conference has met continually since, and has greatly promoted the cause of a united German Mennonitism. But there are still a number of congregations mostly in the country districts and largely from the conservative Baden-Wurtemberg conference that have remained outside of the confederation.

The Mennonites of Germany are still pretty largely a country people, although with the general city trend of the population in recent years, several new urban con-

gregations have been founded. In addition to the ancient congregations in Hamburg-Altona, Emden, Crefeld, Danzig, and Elbing, all of them several hundred years old, among the more recent city congregations founded within the past fifty years are those in the textile city of Gronau, Berlin, Koenigsberg, Munich, Stuttgart, and Heidelberg. Of these latter, the largest and most important is the congregation in Berlin, organized in 1887 with twelve charter members, but now grown to approximately four hundred souls. These members in Berlin, of course, are not new converts to Mennonitism—that is rather rare among the German Mennonites as among the Americans—but former members of eastern churches for the most part who have migrated to the metropolis for cultural and business reasons.

Loss of the Non-resistant Faith

As already noted, all these groups of Mennonites had deserted their traditional non-resistant doctrines by 1914. Nearly all the young men accepted full military service when the war broke out, although a small number in the more conservative churches in Prussia, Baden, and Alsace took advantage of the provisions of the Cabinet Order of 1868 permitting non-combatant service. In a recent issue of the *Mennonitische Blaetter* the editor boasted that there was not a single conscientious objector among the German Mennonites during the war.

Among the reasons given by the German Mennonites themselves for the passing of their traditional peace doctrines are the following. First, the Cabinet Order of 1868 permitting non-combatant service was limited to the descendants of the old Mennonites only. Such as had entered the church since 1868 from the outside, who were not of the original families did not share this exemption; universal military training, too, in times of peace paved

the way for an easy transition to universal service in times of war. Finally not to be forgotten is the fact that the rising tide of nationalism and patriotism that pervaded German national life with increasing force ever since 1870 engulfed Mennonite youth as it did the rest of Germany. For some time before the recent war the south German conference supported a Soldiers' Commission whose business it was to look after the spiritual interests of the Mennonite young men in the training barracks.

The Mennonite periodicals both north and south supported the war from the start, and opened their pages to patriotic articles and pictures of popular generals. During the first year the Municipal Theatre of Berlin, for the purpose no doubt of strengthening the morale of the people, staged Wildenbruch's *Der Mennonit*, originally written in 1882. The central character in this drama is a Mennonite, living in the days of the Napoleonic wars, whom the dramatist brings to a tragic end after renouncing his traditional non-resistant faith on the alleged ground that it was inconsistent with his duty to his fatherland. The Mennonite population successfully protested against the staging of this play, claiming that it did them an injustice, since they were no longer opposed to military service.

According to the *Mennonitische Blaetter* two thousand young Mennonites had gone into service by September 1915, one-fourth of them officers. By that time, too, one hundred and fifteen had fallen in battle, ninety-five had been wounded, and twenty-three had been taken prisoner. Ninety had received the iron cross. The losses were equally heavy during the remainder of the war, but the papers ceased to publish the details. It is estimated that the total number of those who fell during the entire period was about four hundred. When it is remembered

that the total Mennonite population was less than twenty-four thousand, it will be realized how unreservedly the German Mennonites must have supported the war.

Tired of War

For a time after the war when the whole German nation was passing through a period of great despondency and humiliation, the Mennonites seemed temporarily to be in a sympathetic mood toward their traditional views on the question of war and their relation to the state. In a meeting of the Conference of the South German Mennonites in 1923 it was unanimously agreed to petition the German government requesting that in the proposed act providing for universal military training, proper consideration should be given such as had conscientious scruples against entering the army.

The next year, Dr. Christian Neff, one of the best known and most highly respected leaders among the German Mennonites, summarizing an article on the history of non-resistance among the Mennonites, writing in the *Jugendwarte* says,

“the doctrine of non-resistance is and remains a significant religious and ethical problem. Praiseworthy have been the efforts of our churches in solving it, as is well shown in our history. The world war has revived the problem, and laid it afresh on our hearts, and challenged our consciences. May we realize the significance of this question, and above all may our young people consider it earnestly and prayerfully.”

Nazi Supporters

But the Nazi revolution changed all that. Many Mennonites followed the popular trend. In fact a writer in a recent issue of the *Mennonitische Blaetter* proudly boasts that the Mennonites were among the early promoters of the movement, even holding important official

positions in the organization from the start. The Mennonites in the main have given Hitler loyal support ever since, following him whole-heartedly in all his achievements, including the recent incorporation of the Sudeten land in Czechoslovakia.⁹ The younger members of the church especially have largely accepted the un-Christian racial theory of Hitler. The young preacher of the Hamburg congregation in an article in the *Mennonitische Blaetter* in 1934 makes the statement in discussing "Who is My Neighbor" that he must love only the German; and that the Jew, the Negro or the Japanese can in no sense be his neighbor in the Scriptural sense.

The *Mennonitische Blaetter* especially has been most earnest in its efforts to assure the Nazi authorities that the German Mennonites have no pacifist leanings. A recent rumor in circulation in certain circles that Mennonites were lukewarm in their support of war was branded by the paper as a "lie with long legs." Equally painstaking was the effort several years ago to deny all religious affiliation with the peace-loving Liechtenstein Hutterites who were driven out of Austria because of their non-resistant doctrines, and who were helped to a new home in England by the English Quakers, and the Dutch Mennonites, but unaided by the German brethren.

It may be interesting to note that Lutherans and Mennonites in Germany today take opposite sides on the question of religious toleration, just as they did four hundred years ago, but in reverse order. Then Lutherans were hand in glove with the state in sending Mennonites to prison and to the stake. Today it is certain Lutherans in turn who are being sent to concentration camps, while the Mennonites say they have no quarrel with the Nazi

9 This was written before the taking over of Czechoslovakia by Hitler. Whether the German Mennonites, in the main, justify what Hitler has been doing since 1939 the writer does not know.

regime. These Lutherans are making the fight for religious liberty and the freedom of the church. May it not be a fair question to ask why the Mennonites have no quarrel with the state, and whether they have not bought this privilege at too high a price? Is it not perhaps because they have lost their traditional Mennonite conscience on fundamental Mennonite principles, conscience against war, against religious oppression, against a totalitarian state which demands loyalty to the state above loyalty to God. By turning over to the state the unconditional training of their children to promoters of the Nazi ideology, are the German Mennonites perhaps not sowing the wind which their children might have to reap in the generations to come as the whirlwind? Menno Simons, no doubt, would find himself ill at ease, today, among his namesakes in Germany were he to return to his familiar haunts around the Baltic; in fact he would find himself, in all likelihood, in a concentration camp.

At the Versailles treaty the German Mennonites lost nearly half their population to Poland, the Free State of Danzig, and France—a separation along national and linguistic lines that will make the task of Mennonite unification in middle Europe even more precarious in the future than it has been in the past. Those left in Germany proper today, count up to a scant thirteen thousand.¹⁰

¹⁰ The recent war with Poland again reunited all these Polish and Danzig congregations within the Third Reich.

VII

THE HUTTERITES

The persecuting zeal which drove Jacob Hutter and his humble followers across the Moravian border in 1535 gradually spent itself; and when the local noblemen, whose estates had greatly benefitted from the industry and expert farming of the Hutterites, learned that there was no connection whatever between the communism of the Moravian Anabaptists and that of the Münsterites, they refused to carry out the cruel orders of king Ferdinand and emperor Charles to completely annihilate the movement inaugurated by the Tyrolean hatter. Many of the exiles, of both the Hutterite and other Anabaptist groups, now returned to their former homes. Soon the Households were re-occupied and others built. In a few years it was commonly reported that the number of Anabaptists in *Moravia* was again some four or five thousand, mostly Hutterites scattered about in some twenty Households.

Where the protection of interested landlords was wanting, however, these dissenting sects were never entirely safe from attack. An illustration of what they might expect at any time is found in the experience, in the year 1539, of a small group of the brethren, some hundred and fifty of them, who had established themselves a short distance south of Nicholsburg in Lower Austria. Apparently on no pretence whatever they were suddenly apprehended by order of the king, and cast into prison in the castle of Falkenstein. Here they were visited

by priests and doctors of theology attempting to convince the prisoners of the errors of their ways; and by representatives of the government attempting to force from them a confession as to the hiding place of their treasures; for all Hutterite communities were reported to be wealthy. "Our treasure is in the Lord Jesus Christ," the brethren replied," not in worldly possessions." Failing in both these objectives, the authorities released the women, but held the men, some ninety of them, for galley service against the Turks. At Triest, however, on the way to the coast, the prisoners escaped some months later and found their way back to Moravia, all but twelve of them who, recaptured, actually served out their sentence amid great hardship and suffering.

DURING THE SMALKALD WAR

During the Smalkald war which ended with the treaty of Augsburg in 1555, dissenting religious groups throughout the Hapsburg possessions entered another period of severe trial. It will be remembered that throughout the life time of Luther, emperor Charles was so preoccupied with political worries, including a series of wars with his chief rival of long standing, the king of France, and also the constant dread of a Turkish invasion on his eastern frontier, that, though a devout Catholic, yet he had little time to spare for the religious questions then agitating his reign. The Lutheran movement, therefore, had a fairly free hand during this period.

With the settling of his political problems, however, and the beginning of the religious wars in 1546, Charles devoted the remaining few years of his troubled reign to making his empire safe for Catholicism. The result was a bitter religious struggle which showed little sympathy

for religious dissent of any sort. Although many of the local landlords were loath to part with their industrious tenants, the Catholic clergy and higher civil officials were not. Both emperor and king were agreed that Anabaptists of every sort must be completely rooted out, not only from Moravia, but from all the Hapsburg possessions as well. Upon imperial request the Moravian *Landtag* ordered all Hutterites as well as other dissenting groups to immediately renounce their faith or go into exile. Most of the former crossed the frontier into northwestern Hungary, where they established a new settlement at Sabatisch, to which was added later in the century, Levar, and other communities near by in the foothills on the eastern slopes of the Little Carpathians, a region usually spoken of by later chroniclers as Upper Hungary.

In vain the persecuted Moravian brethren plead for mercy, or at least time in which to dispose of their property before leaving. They were not a menace to the country, they said, as reported; for they were less than two thousand in number in all Moravia, living in twenty-one Households. But in Hungary, too, the exiles were as unwelcome as they had been in Moravia. Pressed by king Ferdinand, the local nobility ordered them back. Some, returning, escaped the clutches of their persecutors. But most of them, tolerated on neither side of the boundary line, spent their next five or six years wandering about in the highlands between, finding temporary refuge in forests and waste places, hiding in caves, seeking shelter amid the rocks, finding food and clothing as best they could. "Gladly", says a chronicler of the time, "would they have shared a roof with the cattle and swine, but even that was denied them." No one dared, under severe penalty, give them relief, sell them food and clothing, or furnish them with work. They were declared outlaws—their men, women and children with

everything that that word implies, giving robbers and ruffians the right to attack them wantonly and with impunity; rob them of their goods, ravage their women folk, and attack their men—an opportunity which the lawless elements of the region were not slow to seize.

THE GOLDEN AGE

But a better day was ahead. The treaty of Augsburg, in 1555, which inaugurated a degree of tolerance by transferring from the emperor to the local rulers the right to prescribe the religious faith of the people, and the end of the reign of the bigoted Charles which came about the same time, marked a turning point in the history of religious liberty. The Hutterites, though not one of the tolerated parties officially recognized by the Augsburg agreement, yet in a measure shared with all non-Catholics the religious privileges of the period. There began now for these persecuted people a period called the "Golden Age" in the book of Chronicles, which continued throughout the greater part of the century.

The church grew in numbers and in material prosperity. At its peak it is estimated that the population reached approximately fifteen thousand, living in Moravia and Upper Hungary, and distributed throughout some fifty Households. During all this period the prosperous Hutterite communities made a strong appeal to the less fortunate Anabaptists of other countries as the "Promised Land." A steady stream of emigrant refugees from Switzerland and south Germany kept passing in and out of Moravia, and much of the growth of the native church is to be ascribed to this migration.

The Moravian brethren, too, were ardent missionaries, desiring to share both their material and spiritual

blessings with others. To this end, throughout this period, they continued to send out missionaries to other lands inviting the persecuted everywhere to come to Moravia. This was a dangerous undertaking for the missionaries; for Anabaptists were still outlawed everywhere else in Europe. The records of the time are full of the names of devoted men and women who risked their all to carry the good news throughout middle Europe, most of whom never came back. A few casual examples taken from the chroniclers of the time must suffice here as illustrations of what these devoted and courageous messengers of a new religious faith and a new social order had to suffer in behalf of their convictions.

In 1558, Hans Raiffer, a smith by trade and a minister, was apprehended on his way to the Netherlands. After being put through the most cruel torture on the rack in the hope of turning him from his faith, he was tied to a stake with a rope about his neck, and a chain around his limbs, and in this position burned to a crisp. The executioners explained that they were reluctant to carry out these orders, but if they did not the new emperor would punish them. In the year 1556, a minister was drowned at Venice, and another executed with the sword at Innsbruck. In 1571 Wolf Binder was arrested in Bavaria, and stretched on the rack until it seemed that "the sun would shine through him." Refusing to forsake his faith, he was released from this cruel instrument of torture, and with a song of his own composition on his lips was mercifully beheaded. By the close of the century, no doubt, hundreds of these brave men and women had given their all to promote what they believed to be their Divine commission. As late as 1618, the chroniclers record the imprisonment, torture, and final execution in Tyrol of Jost Wilhelm, a well to do Moravian missionary.

FUNDAMENTAL RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES

As has already been suggested, the Hutterites agreed with the peaceful Anabaptists elsewhere later known as Mennonites in all the essential Anabaptist doctrines, such as adult baptism, rejection of the oath, non-resistance, opposition to office holding, the memorial theory of the Lord's Supper and other characteristic principles and practises. For a time, especially during periods of special stress, they were in rather close touch with the Mennonites of Switzerland and south Germany, and occasionally with those in Holland. They frequently attended Mennonite conferences, being represented at the Strasburg meeting, in 1557, where Menno Simons' Wismar rules were discussed. Although they never bore the name Mennonite, yet they must be included in any complete history of that body of believers.

In their later years they were more consistent followers of certain early characteristic Mennonite doctrines than the Mennonites themselves. They agreed strictly with Menno Simons, and with Jacob Amman of a later date, in the rigid application of the practise of avoidance to all excommunicated members, a very effective disciplinary weapon, especially in a communistic society where not only spiritual fellowship was denied the unfortunate victim of ostracism but where even his bread and butter might be at stake. In their practise of non-resistance too, the Hutterites were more consistent than their Mennonite brethren in the rest of Europe. Their cutlers in the community workshops were not permitted to make any weapons of warfare, only knives and cutlery that could be used for peace purposes. Nor did they manufacture gunpowder, a business engaged in occasionally with great material gain by the Mennonites of both Holland and Prussia, who also claimed non-resist-

ance and opposition to war as one of their principal religious tenets. Nor would they pay war tax. "Blood Money" they called it. The Swiss Brethren in Moravia at this time, Anabaptist immigrants who refused to accept the communistic life of the Hutterites, had no such scruples, and drew no such fine distinctions in aiding the practise of war by this indirect method.

In one important matter, however, the Hutterites were unique, and different from the Mennonite group. They were communists, working together for a common fund, living under a common roof, and eating at a common table, a number of families in a group called a Household. When a new member joined their company he turned all his private property into the common treasury; and when he left, in case that happened, it was not returned. Their communism, unlike most later similar social experiments, rested not upon an economic, but a religious basis. The sharing of material as well as spiritual blessings was as much a part of their religious faith, and as binding a divine command as any other part of their doctrinal system. It is to this religious sanction undoubtedly that one must turn for an explanation for the continued success, lasting now for four centuries, of this social utopia, while nearly all other similar attempts, based on economic considerations only, have lamentably failed. A deep religious conviction, after all, seemingly is the strongest of social forces. Peter Riedeman's *Rechenschaft*, the official confession of faith of the brethren, written before the middle of the sixteenth century, justifies the practise with copious Scriptural quotations not only from the New and Old Testaments, but from the Apocrypha as well. Communism to the Hutterites was not only a convenient form of social organization; it was their religion. Rather than give up the practise, says one of their chroniclers, they would die for it; and many did.

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The Bruderhof

The *Bruderhof*, as each of their colonies or "Households" was called, was a self-sufficient economic as well as social and religious unit, consisting of from twenty to one hundred families, all living under the roof of one or more communal houses. Land in Moravia, as elsewhere in Europe at that time, was held by feudal tenure, in the hands of great landlords. The Households were established under certain stipulations, including frequently agreements to furnish labor at a specified price, or some other useful service, as well as a share of the products of the land. In turn the local landlord, if he was an influential person, would guarantee protection against religious persecution. Since the Hutterites were an industrious people, often well skilled in all sorts of craftsmanship, they were usually in demand by the feudal lords as tenants. For sobriety, skill, industry and reliability, rare virtues in those turbulent times, there were few stewards of estates, millers, and superintendents of vineyards, better than they.

In government each Bruderhof was a complete economic unit. For religious control several might unite under one bishop, but each had a "minister of the word" to minister to their spiritual needs. By his side there was in each unit a "minister of needs," democratically elected by all the male church members, who had almost arbitrary control of the daily economic life of the community. He handled all the money, distributed the work to be done by the various members, made all the necessary purchases, sold the crops, looked after the sale of the manufactured products, represented the business affairs of the community with the outside world—in fact he, together with his assistants, was the business dictator of the community with practically unlimited powers

except such powers as he shared with the church elders, as when new land was to be purchased, or new buildings were to be erected.

Of course there was no private ownership of any sort within the Bruderhof. No one owned anything of his own except the clothes on his back, and perhaps an heirloom or two; but even these latter reverted back to the community as a whole upon the death of the erstwhile owner. All ate at a common table and from common dishes and utensils. Unmarried boys and girls lived in separate dormitories. Only married folks enjoyed a room to themselves with the bare necessary furniture. But even this was for sleeping purposes only and not to be regarded as a private home. All the money made on the side, such as personal tips and pay for extra labor, had to be turned over to the common treasury, upon penalty of severe church censure if the regulation was violated. Every detail of daily living was minutely prescribed like that of a medieval monastery. The time to rise, and retire; when to eat; how much meat to eat, and when; what kind of clothes to wear, their color and cut; when to bathe, and how to pray.

Since each Bruderhof was a self-sufficing economic unit, every occupation known to medieval agriculture and industry was practised among the Hutterites. Besides farming, which was their major occupation, the following artisans were frequently found among them—masons, blacksmiths, sickle smiths, dyers, shoemakers, furriers, wheel-wrights, saddlers, cutlers, watchmakers, tailors, weavers, glass and rope makers, brewers, etc. Since milling was an important industry among them, they frequently located their buildings along a stream which furnished water power, a custom which their descendants perpetuated more than three centuries later along the James river in South Dakota. Being industrious and

thrifty, they produced more than they consumed. "Bee-hives" their Households were often called. Their surplus goods they sold in the open market, and their personal services often to neighboring noblemen. They excelled especially in fine stockraising. From their stables came the finest horses, and cattle in the land; while their cutlery, woolens and linens, could not be surpassed anywhere for quality. For both their services and goods there was a ready demand. Their public baths were frequented by the nobility of the region. Their doctors, in that day of simple remedies, and medical ignorance were among the most skilled. A chronicle of the year 1581 says "In this year emperor Rudolf sent for our doctor George Zobel. Through the grace of God he was again restored to health."

Realizing that their unusual communal life marked them as a peculiar people, and lined them up with the various radical peasant movements of that day in the minds of their neighbors, the Hutterites were especially concerned about their good name among their fellow countrymen not of their faith. To this end the leaders insisted that their members live exemplary lives, and give their neighbors no opportunity for charging them with the vices usually ascribed to collectivism. One of these faults often charged against communism was that of idleness and indifference. The records show that in the later years at least, the Hutterite Households were not entirely free from this temptation. In 1640 it was agreed in the Levar community, in a meeting of the officials that since there were so many holidays to be observed during the week, laborers should work all day on Saturday. For with too much idleness, they said, it would not be possible to support their wives and children and the old men and women. Again at a meeting largely attended, ten years later, at Sabatisch, it was deemed neces-

sary to warn the farmers that in harvest and threshing time they should be more industrious, and should not spend three or four days to do what ought to be accomplished in one or two. The laborers in the vineyards were informed that even the neighbors complain "how our people waste so much time in going to work, and those in the lead even sit down to wait for those in the rear to catch up." When lunch is carried to them in the vineyards and fields "they do little before they eat, and then they sit down another hour before they begin to work." The workers are urged to do their work well so that the church may not lose its good name.

Great care was exercised that the material that went into the making of their goods should be of the very best quality, and all services rendered should be the most efficient. Codes were drawn up for every industry and occupation prescribing in detail the high standards they had set for themselves in all their efforts to make honest goods and please their patrons. At a meeting in Sabatisch, in 1654, of the "bath attendants" and the doctors, who seemingly were as closely affiliated here, and perhaps more logically so than were the doctors and the barbers of a later date, a number of rules were laid down to guide the profession in its conduct, and to increase its efficiency. The "bath attendants" should remember that they were serving their calling for their own soul's salvation and for the common good; they should so conduct themselves, therefore, that they might bring credit to the community and the brethren. Especially should they be diligent in the reading of the Scriptures, and in the books of medicine; also be careful to gather herbs and roots. The advice to go to bed early, and rise upon waking was perhaps as good for others as for the doctors; as was also the suggestion that they should not gad about either in the Household or outside indulging in idle gos-

sip; nor were they to frequent the drinking houses which surrounded them on all sides. They were to be friendly to all, discriminate against no one, and bring all their fees to the common treasury. From the brethren no fees or gifts were to be accepted for services rendered. Neither doctors nor attendants were to make their own appointments. They should also be diligent in teaching novitiates so that their art might not be lost to the brotherhood.

It was this meticulous regard for honest and efficient performance of every duty that created such a strong demand even among the local nobility for Hutterite service of every sort. Not only, as we have already seen, were their baths and doctors in great repute everywhere, but their midwives as well.

Religious Life

Like the Mennonites, the Hutterites believed that true religion ought to be more than merely a system of orthodox beliefs; that it should function in right living. Much was made, therefore, of leading an upright life. Occupations that offered special temptations to human frailties were tabooed. Visiting taverns was strictly forbidden the members, because of the "ungodly activities" usually associated with the life there. Wine might be offered visitors in the home, but never for money.

In their attitude toward business activities they held the prevailing economic theories common to the Christians of that day,—namely, that money as such was non-productive, and that buying and selling, therefore, was a species of gambling, neither religiously permissible nor economically sound. Merchandising consequently was left to the Jews who had no such conscientious scruples against the making of profits. Goods might be bought in the outside markets by the Bruderhof, but for use only,

not for resale. In all their private and business life the Hutterites demanded the strictest adherence to just and fair dealing, and to pure living. Even their enemies in their best moments could not forbear giving them a clean slate for upright living. A contemporary Catholic writer, who had no sympathy whatever for their religious views or social practises, nevertheless, after a visit to their Bruderhofs in Upper Hungary in the late seventeenth century says that he saw among them

“no anger, envy, passion or malice; no vain zeal for earthly things; no gambling spirit, no vanity; in short a most harmonious and beautiful life.”

Their whole striving, he said, seemed to be to build up the kingdom of God, and promote the well being of human kind.

“Would that I could introduce this kind of life” this writer continues, “among the Roman Catholics; so far as I know it even surpasses that of the monasteries. Anyone who could establish such a noble way of Christian living under the protection of the authorities would be a second saint to Saint Dominic or Francis.”

But to the writer in question the orthodox Catholic faith was even more essential than pure living. Both, however, are to be cultivated. Unfortunately, so he thinks, one has the orthodox faith, but not the noble life; while the other, though leading a pure life, yet is heretical in his faith.

“I have said to myself,” he concludes, “If you could just convert these stubborn Anabaptists so that they could show your Catholic brethren their art of living, what a blessed man you would be, or if you could only persuade your orthodox brethren to lead, like the Anabaptists, such an apparently Christian and noble life, what an accomplishment would be to your credit.”

Of course there were bigoted Catholic writers who could see nothing beyond their narrow orthodoxy, and who, therefore, magnified all the faults of the Hutterite system and saw nothing in the godly lives of these honest and humble followers of the early New Testament church except wolves in sheep's clothing. The Hutterite chroniclers themselves best describe this attitude among their more bigoted Catholic critics,

"As soon as we set foot out of doors," writes one of the chroniclers in the big book of Chronicles in the latter part of the sixteenth century, "we are maligned as Anabaptists, Bi-Baptists, New Baptists, Schismatics, Revolutionists, and all such sorts of blasphemous names. Everybody takes up the cry against us, and mocks us and spreads all kinds of ugly lies against us—that we eat our children, and are guilty of all sorts of unmentionable crimes even worse than that. All this because we are followers of Jesus Christ. If one goes about with only a staff in his hand, a sign that he wishes no one any harm, or if he prays before his meals, he is slandered as a heretic; but as soon as he recants and conducts himself as a heathen with a sword in his belt, and a musket on his shoulder, the world immediately welcomes him back and regards him as a good Christian. Or again, if one leaves the church and returns to his evil ways, shows himself a good fellow, begins to sing filthy drinking songs in the tavern, puts a silly feather in his cap, acts a fool generally, frequents the gambling joints and dance halls, puts a big calf skin about his neck, and wears gay clothes, all embroidered with lace, and swears like a Frenchman, and blasphemes God, then he is welcomed back again and received by his own. You are a good fellow, they will say to him. You have done well to leave these schismatics. Such an one is doubly welcomed by the World, no matter how evil his ways may be."

Such is the reaction, according to this old chronicler, of the religious leaders of the time in the state church toward the rigid standards of conduct upheld by the Hutterites.

Schools

It speaks well for the intelligence of the Hutterites that in an age when illiteracy was the common lot of the average man they had already developed a well organized system of compulsory education. Their educational program was admirably designed to perpetuate their religious ideals and to prepare their young people for the community life they were living. First place was given to religion. "We are concerned not with worldly, but rather with Heavenly wisdom" one of their teachers says.

Children were taken from their mother's breast at less than two years of age, and placed in charge of the community nursery, which was not only a nursery but also a kind of kindergarten where they were taught little prayers, simple Bible verses, and given such religious training as their little minds could absorb. At five or six the children were placed under formal school discipline, girls and boys separately. Religion, vocation, and good citizenship in the Household community were the objectives of this program. All were taught reading and writing, the history of the church, the catechism, and such other religious precepts as would make them not only good Christians but good Hutterites as well. Besides, the boys were all taught some trade or prepared for some special work to which they would be assigned later in life; the girls were instructed in spinning, and general household duties. The whole course of instruction led directly to membership in the church and some allotted place in the community scheme. Practically all were baptized, supposedly upon a confession of faith, but sometimes quite young.

Since child welfare was a community concern, it was perhaps only natural that the rules and regulations governing child training should pay more attention to the physical well being of children than was true of the usual

school systems of that time. In a code of instructions given by Peter Walpot, a celebrated leader in the church at that time, to a gathering of teachers of Auspitz in 1568, and later enlarged into one of the earliest treatises on teaching to be found in all Europe, numerous practical measures are suggested for the physical care of children. Long before the discovery of the germ theory of disease, sick children here in the dormitories were to be segregated from the well; teachers and nurses, when examining the mouths of diseased children, were to be careful to wash their hands before examining others, so as not to contaminate those not sick. Children when coming to the schools from outside the community as often happened, for Hutterite schools had a good reputation among their neighbors, were to be carefully examined for contagious diseases, and segregated if necessary. Special precaution was taken against what was called the "French disease" which seemed prevalent throughout Europe of that day, though perhaps rare among the Hutterites themselves, because of their high standards of sexual morality. Bed linen should be changed often and always kept clean. The admonition to bathe at least once each month may seem somewhat conservative in these days of the modern bath tub, but no doubt unusually liberal in an age when the taking of a bath by even so prominent a person as Queen Elizabeth was an event worthy of special mention by the court chronicler. Each child was to have its own comb and brush.

Play was given little recognition in this school program. Rules stipulating hours for work and everything else were carefully prescribed, complains one writer, but not one hour for play. The value of physical exercise was recognized, however. The teachers were instructed not to send their children to bed immediately after supper, since that was against nature; but some exercise

should be taken before retiring; walking was recommended under the guidance of the teacher or some other older person. Among other regulations designed to promote the physical comfort of the children was one demanding that their boots be kept well greased so that they might not become too stiff and thus produce corns on the feet of the wearer. The rule that girls should arise at five in the morning to begin their spinning, and boys at six, was perhaps not popular among the children; nor perhaps the stipulation that they retire at six o'clock in the summer and at sunset in the winter.

Children should be taught the virtues that would fit them especially to live in a closed community, according to this Hutterite school program,—patience, gentleness, modesty, self control and consideration for others. The teacher should inculcate these virtues by example rather than by the use of the rod. That human nature is not the same in all children was well recognized. Some are won with kind words, says Walpot, others by the promise of rewards; but there are those who must be ruled by a firm hand. All, however, “in the fear of the Lord.” Such gross sins as stealing and lying must be corrected by corporal punishment, administered only by the teacher, and publicly so that all the children may be inspired with a wholesome fear of wrong doing. The teacher, who was the chief disciplinary officer of the Household, both within and without school hours, must exercise his peculiar power, not in anger but for the good of the child. The child on the other hand, according to the rules, must submit to his punishment willingly as deserving it, and must not in any way try to ward it off. The teacher of course must be careful not to inflict permanent physical injury. He is not to strike on the head or mouth, nor stop the mouth of his victim with a cushion or cloth to prevent an outcry.

The teachers were selected among the brotherhood, for life, and of course without pay; and with little preparation beyond what they had themselves received in their own elementary schools.

For higher education the Hutterites had little need, and less sympathy. In fact they forbade their members to attend schools outside of their own whereas they said "only worldly wisdom and cunning is sought, while Godly things are neglected." Doctors of Theology and the learned men of the universities were their chief persecutors in matters of religious orthodoxy, and it was not to be expected that they would be especially drawn toward a group that was the chief cause of their troubles.

But their elementary schools, designed to fit their children for efficient everyday living in the community, were among the best of their day, and often visited, as already suggested, by others not of their faith. Hutterite children during this period were no doubt among the most literate, the healthiest, most religious and highly trained, and best behaved of all Europe.

Das Gemeinde Geschichtsbuch

Unlike their Mennonite brethren, who were unusually modest and fearful perhaps, about recording their doings, the Hutterites on the other hand recorded rather completely all their experiences, both religious and economic, throughout the whole of their checkered career and wanderings across southeastern Europe. These annals, usually kept by the church leaders, and by them handed down from one generation to another, seemingly were never printed in Europe, but kept in manuscript, and carried along as a priceless treasure throughout all their trekking for religious liberty. It is usually spoken of in the records as *Das Gemeinde Geschichtsbuch* (Book of Chronicles). It contains an illuminating record of the chief activities

and the deaths of their church leaders; their sufferings and persecutions at the hands of their enemies; gruesome experiences at the hands of marauding armies during the numerous wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under the Turks, Catholics and Protestants; national calamities and unusual natural phenomena such as the appearance of comets, earthquakes, floods, drouths; as well as numerous rules and regulations passed from time to time controlling their communal life and religious practise. Church quarrels, as well, are faithfully recorded, and such other routine experiences as befall a humble and righteous people trying to serve their God as best they can in a cruel and unsympathetic world.

This Chronicle book with its accumulated records of Hutterite experiences, handed down through the centuries, seemingly was never published, but preserved in manuscript. It was thought lost by the church historians of fifty years ago, but was finally discovered by them in the Hutterite community of Alberta, Canada, by whom it was committed to print for the first time in America in 1923, under the editorship of Dr. Rudolf Wolkan, an eminent Anabaptist scholar of Vienna.

Riedeman's *Rechenschaft*

Another work highly prized by the Hutterites, and the chief source of their confession of faith, was a book called *Rechenschaft* written about 1545, by one of their teachers and chief theologian, Peter Riedeman. This volume was published several times in Europe during the sixteenth century, but in America it was known only in manuscript until 1902, when it was printed here for the first time in Berne, Indiana. Riedeman, whom the chroniclers of the day spoke of as a "God enlightened man, and a soundly evangelical minister," spent much of his time as a messenger of the Hutterite faith throughout

south Germany; and like Paul, was often in jail, and Bunyan-like wrote most of his masterpieces in prison.

The book covers the usual orthodox views on such typical Anabaptist doctrines as infant baptism, rejection of the oath, non-resistance, the magistracy and the virtues of the simple upright life; but also treats of the distinctive beliefs and doctrines which distinguish the Hutterites from other Anabaptists. A few random extracts may be of interest. On the question of community of goods Riedeman says "Worldly as well as spiritual goods are the free gift of God, and must be shared." This view is corroborated by copious Scriptural quotations.

Many of the later austere social practises and traditions of the brethren find a basis in this early confession of faith. The Hutterite tailor when making clothes for outsiders evidently was expected to be more consistent in the practise of his profession than his modern brother, the Lancaster county Mennonite drygoods merchant, who today sells his customers all sorts of fine hats of the latest styles, but who at the same time permits his wife only the old fashioned regulation bonnet; or the New Mennonite barber at Bluffton, who will bob the hair of his worldly patrons without the least compunction, but would suffer the excommunication of his own daughter for a similar offence; for Riedeman exhorts the community tailors when making clothes for outsiders to serve them faithfully, but as to gaily colored clothes that are trimmed with laces, embellished borders, and all sorts of frills, which can only encourage an arrogant and proud spirit, with such the tailors should have nothing to do in order that they might "keep their consciences clear before their God."

When brethren meet they should greet one another with the words "Peace be with you." This should come from the heart and must be more than mere lip service.

This form of greeting, however, is for Christians only. He who uses these words lightheartedly, or exchanges them with a lighthearted person like a drunkard or a gambler does so at the risk of his soul's salvation. Handshaking and embracing are also symbols of unity and peace. But men and women should meet one another with a handshake only. *Zutrinken* (treating), says Riedeman, is a bad habit, leading to drunkenness, a net devised by the devil to lead sober men astray, and so to be avoided like a serpent. Singing, praying and fasting are encouraged as godly practises. Merchandising, as already indicated, is forbidden as a sinful practise, for it increases the price for the poor and takes the bread out of their mouths.

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

The Golden Age of the brethren came to an end before the close of the sixteenth century. For the next hundred and fifty years this slowly vanishing band of devoted Christians kept up a brave but losing struggle against great odds: first against the marauding armies of both Catholics and Protestants that swept over middle Europe during the whole first half of the seventeenth century; then against the plundering Turks during the second half; and finally against the relentless zeal of the bigoted Jesuits who during the first half of the eighteenth were determined that all dissenting sects, not officially tolerated by the Augsburg agreement of 1555, must be entirely exterminated from the Catholic possessions of the Hapsburgs. By the middle of the eighteenth century the humble and faithful followers of Jacob Hutter had practically been completely rooted out of both Moravia and Hungary. Only a small remnant survived by trekking to south Russia.

During the Thirty Years War, especially, the Hutter-

ites, living right in the heart of the battle torn areas of that disastrous conflict, suffered untold horrors from both armies as they marched back and forth across this ill fated territory. As is well known, middle Europe was so completely devastated by this cruel war that it did not recover for a full century. Cities were burned down; the armies lived off the land, ruthlessly cutting down the men, and ravishing the women. The well filled granaries, sleek cattle and fine looking horses of the Bruderhofs offered special temptation to the marauding parties of both armies.

One citation from the records must suffice as an illustration of what must have been a rather common experience of all during that troubled period. There were many such. In 1619, twelve Households in the Moravian settlement were completely burned to the ground; seventeen others greatly damaged; forty men and women cruelly cut down in cold blood, some under severe torture; and two hundred horses, all the cattle and sheep driven away. "Many dear people," the chronicler of the event says, "were cut down and so cruelly and unmercifully tortured causing such distress and misery as can hardly be conceived." The next year the community at Pribitz was attacked by fifteen hundred troops—it is immaterial whether by Catholic or Protestant, both were alike guilty of this inhuman treatment—and completely destroyed. In three hours fifty-two men were killed, and seventeen other men and women so mutilated that they died within a few days. Every sort of inhuman punishment was resorted to by these murderous plunderers. For the purpose of wringing from the brethren a confession of the hiding places of their supposed wealth they "burned them with hot irons and flaming torches, poured hot grease over their bare bodies, cut deep wounds into their flesh, which they filled with

powder, then ignited, jerked off their fingers, slashed into them with their swords as though they were cabbage heads. One Brother's head they completely twisted about so that he actually faced straight backward." All this inhuman treatment of a peaceful people was so unnecessary, since the Hutterites never resisted with force; even had they desired to do so, it would have been futile because of their inferior numbers. It was a case of pure wantonness, perpetrated by bands of roving troops undisciplined, giving way to their unbridled passions, held together by the promise of plunder, living off the fat of the land. The armies of the Thirty Years War for the most part were inadequately supported by the central governments, and had to live off the population.

As if this were not already enough misery all at one time for a people already sorely afflicted, there soon followed now an imperial order in September of 1622, demanding that all Hutterites leave Moravia within four weeks on penalty of severe punishment if not obeyed. The Hapsburg possessions had now come under complete Catholic control. The tolerant Liechtensteins also on whose estates the Hutterites had enjoyed a long period of comparative peace had in the meantime been succeeded by the intolerant van Dietrichsteins, whose present head was a cardinal in the church, and thus more than pleased to carry out the order of his emperor. In vain the poor people plead that they might at least be given until the next spring to make preparation for leaving, since it was now approaching winter. But their pleading fell on deaf ears. They were driven, in midwinter, several thousand of them, some twenty of the remaining Households, across the border into Hungary to seek shelter wherever they might find it. Some of them finally found their way to their brethren in Sabatisch and Levar, communities established in the preceding century. Another group started

a new colony at Alwintz, near Hermanstadt, in the south-eastern corner of what was then Transylvania, or Siebenbergen, now a part of the new Roumania, being invited there by the famous Bethlen Gabor, Prince of Transylvania, one of the Protestant generals during the war, and favorable to the Protestant sects. By 1650 the last Household had vanished from what had once been the promised land of Moravia.

A HUNDRED YEARS IN HUNGARY AND TRANSYLVANIA

Here in Hungary and Transylvania, the Hutterites now found a temporary home for another century; but they never recovered the prosperity of their palmiest Moravian days; nor did they entirely escape the hazards of invasions and wars that continually threatened the populations of that troubled section of the European border. Their number at best could never have exceeded several thousand, and even that was continually diminishing. Throughout the latter part of the seventeenth century their settlements were subject to the continued raids of the Turkish armies that during this period were threatening to overrun all middle Europe, culminating in the final siege of Vienna in 1683. Frequently in these raids their houses were burned down and cattle driven away; their men often carried away to the galleys, and their women to a worse fate. In 1665, they found themselves in such dire straits that they were compelled to call upon their Mennonite brethren in Holland for help; and by 1667 they had to give up their communal life for a time in some of the settlements in Hungary.

A few random extracts taken from the records will perhaps best indicate their varied experiences during the next hundred years.

1658. In this year the principality of Siebenbergen was over run with Turks and Tartars, robbing, murdering and burning with great damage to all the land. Over 1000 people were murdered. An unmentionable number of people and cattle were carried away; the whole land was devastated. Alwintz was almost totally destroyed.

1659. This year in Janury emperor Leopold issued to the brethren a letter of protection guarding them against all marauding parties.

1662. This year in the month of May there were two heavy earthquakes which shook the buildings, which God sent us no doubt for a good reason.

1663. On the third day of September the Turks and Tartars arrived at Dechtiz a short time before dinner. They took captive thirty-five souls, and two of the brethren were cut down and murdered. The buildings were burned down, and all the crops in the fields destroyed. The next day the community at Sabatisch was destroyed.

1677. On July 9, about noon at Seniz it rained copious drops of blood which was seen by numerous witnesses.

1678. On April 27 a sister by the name of Susanna, who had been held in captivity by the Turks for fifteen years, was released upon payment of 150 florin ransom money and restored to us again without the loss of her faith. God be praised.

1679. This year was one of great heat which caused a great deal of sickness, including the pest and other evils, and took many lives. It is reported that in Vienna 20,000 died, and in Pressburg over 11,000. No doubt it was a visitation of the hand of God because of the sins of the people without any sign of repentance.

1683. The year 1683 ended with great tribulation, fear, terror, misery, famine and death. It often seemed as though everything would go to ground. Many children and older people died.

1733. In this year came the terrifying mandate that we should not baptize our new born babes, but that we must take them to the priests for baptism or suffer a heavy penalty. The elders and the superintendent together with the brethren met at Sabatisch to consult regarding this unheard of order, and decided not without many tears and twangs of conscience, to obey this order, since there was

no other way out of this tyranny This decision caused a great deal of dissatisfaction in the church, and resulted in a division.

1748. In October, Zacharias Walter wrote to the Mennonite pastor at Amsterdam, Johan Deknatel, concerning certain points of doctrine.

1749. This year the brethren in Trenchin also were ordered to have their new born babies baptized by the Catholic priests.

1754. The entire community at Sabatisch consists of 220 souls. They refrain from making proselytes. The *Habaner* among them, however, are not permitted to enter the Catholic church when they take their children there for baptism. They pay little attention to the church holidays. They bury their dead in their own church yards which they call "Garden of the Dead." Young people among them drink only water, from twenty years on also beer; but wine, only the elder people and the sick.

1761. On March 21, Jesuit missionaries, accompanied by four guards, appeared at Sabatisch, arrested three of the leaders, Walter, Pulmon, and Cseterle, and took them away. The meeting house was closed, the key turned over to the Jesuit representative, and the brethren were warned that they must attend his preaching and send their children to his catechetical class. They were ordered to give up all their books, to dismiss their teachers, and send their children to the Catholic schools. The *Habaner* were forbidden to carry on their services. Many of the brethren vigorously protested against these measures and cried out that they would rather lay their necks on the block and lose their

lives than obey the Catholic priest and send their children to his school.

1786. Old Jacob Miller died at Sabatisch a heretic. This Miller declared in his day that he joined the Catholics only to enjoy peace. In his heart he always remained true to the faith of his fathers.

And so it went. For the better part of three centuries this small band of humble Christians, clinging tenaciously to their convictions, and choosing rather to suffer martyrdom than forsake their faith wandered from one land to

another in futile search of that religious toleration so well exemplified in their own peaceful lives; and now at the end of this period they seemingly were no nearer the goal of their quest than at the beginning. The world had become somewhat more humane but not more tolerant. Ravaged by plundering bands of marauding troops, outlawed by imperial decrees, hounded from pillar to post by both state and church, the wonder is that they did not quit the hard struggle long before. In all history there are few finer examples of courageous faith and of extreme loyalty to religious conviction.

As indicated in the records cited above, hardly had the Turkish dangers vanished before another peril appeared even more threatening to the Hutterite faith,—the firm determination of the Jesuit clergy to thoroughly root out every religious belief not specifically protected by the religious agreements of the time. The few Anabaptist groups especially still left in the empire were the specific objects of their wrath. This crusade reached its peak in the reign of Maria Theresa, herself a most devoted Catholic. To one, Delphini, an ardent Jesuit and confirmed advocate of entire extinction, was committed the task of either converting the Hutterites, or driving them out of the land. This willing agent evidently was given a free hand by the imperial authorities to use such methods as he thought best to accomplish his purpose, just short of the death sentence of course. He made the most of his liberal orders.

As just seen, the Jesuits forced the brethren to give up their religious books and substitute Catholic books instead, compelled them to send their children to the priests for baptism, and ordered all to attend Catholic services. They forbade them to hold meetings of their own, and when the order was disobeyed, officials often broke them up, or compelled the worshippers to remain

and listen to a Jesuit sermon instead. Unwilling victims were frequently beaten into submission. Ministers especially were under suspicion, often imprisoned, sometimes dying from mistreatment. The civil authorities were in hearty sympathy with this Jesuit policy. To the contention of the Hutterites that "they had always shown themselves true and obedient subjects; had always willingly helped support the common burdens of the land; had served their landlords well; and their peaceful, sober Anabaptist groups especially still left in the empire were and honest daily life was well known"; and further that "the guarantee of the religious liberty granted them in 1635 was still in force," and thus they could not convince themselves that the recent royal mandate ordering them to send their children to the Catholic School and they must all become Catholics represented the real intentions of the government, the authorities made the counter charge that the farmer "would pay no war taxes, disobeyed the government, set up their own system of settling disputes, abused the sacrament of holy baptism," and finally that they "refused to accept the mercy offered them."

The Jesuits manifested their usual cunning in their method of undermining the faith of the Hutterites through the education of their children. The religious convictions of adults could not be changed, but children through the medium of Catholic schools might easily be turned into good Catholics. But for the older people, too, they made the way easy through compromise. After a long period of futile coercion, they finally tried persuasion and temptation. The brethren might retain some of their cherished political exemptions, their distinctive economic and social institutions, and even some of their religious practises—community houses if they so desired, and the right to baptize their own children, if they would only

accept a few of the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith—infant baptism and attendance at Catholic services. They were also promised exemption from military service and certain objectionable war taxes. Most of the Hutterites finally accepted this half Catholic, half Hutterite compromise. *Habaner* they were later called, but nobody today knows why. But by those from whom they withdrew they were known as “stepbrothers.”

The small remnant of the faithful who refused to bow the knee to Baal gradually drifted out of the Hapsburg lands and crossed over into Russia which in the meantime had become the new Promised Land for all the persecuted peoples of middle Europe. By 1800 the last followers of the old school Simon pure Hutterites had vanished from Hungary and Transylvania. These “*Habaner*” colonies, with their special religious and political privileges, speaking the German language, and living in closed communities, maintained their identity in Upper Hungary, now Czechoslovakia, for many years; but in course of time they lost their special status, exchanged their foreign German for the native Slovakian, forgot their traditions, and have since become absorbed into the common civil and religious life of the community.

New Blood from Carinthia

In the meantime, the original Hutterite movement, of Moravian origin, might have completely collapsed had it not been for the acquisition of new recruits from a totally unexpected quarter. In the archduchy of Carinthia, a member of the Hapsburg empire, there appeared just at this time a small band of Christians, who because of their espousal of many of the doctrines of Luther, were officially known as Lutherans; but who, influenced to a large extent also by their independent reading of the Bible, and especially of the works of the highly evangel-

ical Lutheran, Johan Arndt, an author well known among the Mennonites of the time as well, were more like the Anabaptists in their religious views than orthodox Lutherans.

Lutherans not being tolerated in Carinthia at this time, Maria Theresa had this small band deported at government expense in 1755, to another of her possessions, Transylvania, where both Catholics and Lutherans were free to exercise their religious views; and where the emigrants were promised new homes and lands upon their arrival. But here the exiles soon ran into further trouble. The Lutherans in Transylvania did not meet the requirements of an evangelical New Testament church as the Carinthian brethren had conceived it; besides, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the empress which was demanded of them as a pre-requisite to receiving their land grants, they were denied the promised homes. Thus they were set adrift, looking for work and a resting place wherever they could find it. Some of them wandered into Alwintz, and other Hutterite colonies about Hermanstadt, where they found religious views and practises more like their own than any they had yet observed. Most of the exiles ultimately joined the Households of the brethren and became an integral part of the Hutterite movement from then on. The best evidence perhaps that the Carinthians remained loyal to this choice is the fact that many of the typical names found in the Hutterite Households in Dakota and Canada today trace their origin back to Carinthia—*Hofer, Kleinsasser, Mueller, Glanzer, Waldner*. This Carinthian contingent became the backbone of the Transylvania Hutterite group from this time on, and was perhaps responsible for the restoration of communism among them.

But by casting their lot with the despised Hutterites, the new recruits forfeited the toleration promised them

by the empress. As Lutherans they would have been tolerated in Transylvania, but not as Hutterites. If they would not be Lutherans they must become Catholics. And so, they now shared the common experiences of all Hutterites. Their leaders were arrested and thrown into prison, their congregations scattered; and their religious practises proscribed.

Despairing finally of finding peace in Transylvania, the whole body, both the new recruits and the faithful remnant of the older group, now decided to chance emigration across the Carpathian mountains into Wallachia, under Turkish rule, where neither Catholic or Lutheran or Hutterite was known. All Christians looked alike to the Turk. After successfully casting the lot, upon whose favorable decision rested the determination to take this final step, a group of sixty-seven weary souls gathered at Creutz, near Alwintz, for the departure. All the villagers came out to see them off; some glad they were going; others fearful that they might be punished by the authorities for permitting their outlawed neighbors to leave in peace.

The departing caravan, piling such of their personal belongings as they could carry with them into two small wagons, drawn by several oxen, leaving many of their leaders behind in prison, and forsaking all their earthly possessions, started out with heavy hearts. All the able bodied men, women and children, with packs on their backs, and some with small children as well, and sticks in their hands, trudged along on foot. Only the feeble and sick could be loaded on the few wagons. The journey toward the mountains was made mostly by night, and the larger towns were avoided. The slow climb over the mountains was especially arduous and difficult. Finally reaching safety across the border in Wallachia, they set up a temporary camp, and sent a delegation to Bucharest

to find a permanent location. Here the delegation met a sympathetic German who had a large estate nearby where the tired pilgrims found a temporary home for a time. They had to begin life all over again and erect their own shelter and primitive living quarters. "It was indeed strange for us to live in the ground, but we had peace and quiet, and above all complete freedom of conscience" says one of their number.

Unfortunately the arrival of the Hutterites here in what at first seemed a land of freedom was ill timed. Russia and Turkey soon engaged in war, and the unlucky victims of so many troubles again found themselves right in the heart of another battle zone, where the Turks robbed them of the property and money, and sent their men into captivity and galley slavery. And so, after a few years of these experiences they decided to take up the wanderer's staff once more. They had in the meantime won the sympathy of General Semetin, the Russian general in Moldavia, by whom they were advised to settle in south Russia where they would find not only the religious liberty they had been seeking so long, but freedom from Turkish invasions as well. Acting upon the general's advice, and with his help they left their brief Wallachian home, in 1770, and founded a new settlement on the estates of Field Marshal Count Romanzov at *Wischenka*, one of the count's manors, on the river Desna, in the province of Tscheringov. Here they were granted religious toleration, military exemption, financial aid, and such other concessions as empress Catherine and local noblemen were offering at the time to industrious artisans and thrifty farmers upon their recently conquered lands. After a few years of pioneering the Hutterites now again settled down to a normal prosperous life. "So we began to settle down with our spinning and weaving and with the simple household necessities" writes Johannes Wald-

ner, the chronicler of this period. A few years later the little colony was augmented by the arrival of most of the prisoners, who in the meantime had been released by the Hapsburg authorities, including Mathias Hofer, a poet, dreamer and grumbler, who had already spent sixteen years in prison; and almost the entire Glanzer family, who had been held under examination five years in the city hall. The commanding general gave them a passport and permitted them to take their inheritance with them. They were given an escort to the border. Only three sisters remained in the land, and they had married and accepted the Lutheran faith. But, says historian Johannes Waldner, "They had little happiness and joy, and suffered much, for they had a bad conscience all the time, and did not attend the Lutheran church, not even the Lord's Supper, and would rather have come back to the brotherhood if they had been free."¹

IN RUSSIA

Here at Wischenka the brethren now enjoyed for a time the complete religious toleration and economic freedom which they had been in search of so long. It seems a strange irony of fate, and a travesty on the good name of the Christian religion, to have one set of Christians hounded from one Christian country to another, and even burned at the stake by another set of so called followers of the same faith, and to have the victims of this intolerance finally find refuge from persecution only

¹ Some years later such of the brethren as had remained faithful to the Hutterite teachings in Hungary, or having joined the "Habaner" under pressure had again come back into the fold, also found their way to Russia. As seen above, by 1800, outside of the few scattered "Habaner" settlements in Hungary, the land of the autocratic Czars became the sole home and asylum of the long persecuted followers of Jacob Hutter. See Johan Loserth—*Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April 1930.

by fleeing across the borders into the land of the heathen Turk, and the half heathen Russian, neither of whom had the advantage of the spiritual enlightenment of the great Reformation.

In fact here in the land of the big Bear, they enjoyed almost too much economic and political freedom; for like their fellow Germans, the Mennonites, and other religious colonists in south Russia, they were granted economic and social liberties above those of the native Russians themselves, most of whose peasants were still serfs. And so it was not altogether unexpected that upon the death of their benefactor, Count Romanzov, his son and heir, forgetting the promises made by the father, tried to reduce the Hutterite colony to the status of his native tenants, that of serfdom. Unable to turn their new landlord from his determination, the brethren appealed to St. Petersburg, and in 1801 secured from here a grant of land on the crown properties a little farther down the Desna in the same province, and under the same liberal terms granted the Mennonites just the year before. To this place, called *Raditschew*, they removed their colony, forty-four families, the same year, and re-established a Bruderhof along the old traditional communistic lines.

The Raditschew community grew slowly in numbers. The colonists soon built a mill along the Desna, and developed the different trades required for running a self-sufficing economic community; but they never quite reached the high degree of well-being enjoyed during their brief stay at Wischenka. The community life, too, did not seem to function as smoothly in the days of freedom as it had in the earlier days of persecution. The tradesmen especially were loath to turn over the whole of the profits they sometimes made out of their efforts. The rules of the society demanded that each trade should have its master whose duty it was to purchase the raw

material necessary, see to the manufacturing of the product, and sell the finished goods. The profits were to be turned over into the common treasury. But each master was inclined to handle the profits himself, so complained one of the leaders of the time, and to turn over to the superintendent only the records. Quite a number seemingly preferred the greater freedom outside the community to the more restricted life within the Household. Among these was Jacob Walter, assistant to the elder, who had built a house of his own for his family outside the community house. This division between the elder Johan Waldner, who represented the old order favoring communism, and his assistant Jacob Walter, who did not, divided the colony into two almost equal factions on this crucial question. Both leaders were equally stubborn in maintaining their views. "I would rather go to the martyr's stake than give up the old traditions," said the grey-haired Johan Waldner. "I would die before going back to community life again," replied his younger opponent and assistant.

Walter appealed to the government at St. Petersburg to arbitrate the matter, and especially to permit those desiring to withdraw to share equally with those remaining the community property. The government, especially interested at this time in everything that promoted the welfare and harmony of its numerous foreign colonies in south Russia, assumed the task of smoothing out the troubles. The St. Petersburg representative, however, seemingly not favorable to the community system, sent in an unfavorable report on the economic and social conditions in the Bruderhofs. The Hutterites were not as prosperous nor as far advanced culturally, he said, as the rest of the German colonists in New Russia. Children were not as well taken care of as under an individual system. And that is perfectly obvious, he

added, because it is against nature, since neither father nor mother can do for their children what they would if they alone were responsible for their care. The general health of the people as a whole was not as good. In the whole colony of fifty families only two persons have passed the age of fifty years. The population growth has been slow. Since 1802 when the settlement was founded there has been an increase of only fifty-eight souls. At that rate it will take them sixty or seventy years to double their number, while among the Mennonites it takes only thirty years. So reported this investigator.

All attempts to bring about unity, however, were in vain. Walter and his party withdrew from the brotherhood, taking with them their share of the community property. But in the end everything worked out well. Some of the dissenters, not finding their independence what they had expected, returned the next year; and in the meantime a fire completely destroyed the buildings of the old Bruderhof. Rather than rebuild, now both parties agreed to dissolve the "Brotherhood" and distribute all the property. And so, in 1819, the community way of life was again given up by the Hutterite brethren. Stout hearted old Johan Waldner, however, did not long survive his disappointment. He died the next year.

The rest of the story of the Hutterites in Russia can be told in a few words. They gradually recovered their material prosperity and their spiritual balance. By 1842 their population had increased to such extent that they petitioned for, and were granted a new tract of land in the Molotschna region, near the Mennonite settlement. Here Johan Cornies, the well known Mennonite educational and agricultural leader, helped them to locate a new colony which they called *Hutterthal*. A little later a daughter colony was established not far off by the name of *Johannesruh*, followed soon after by *New Hutterthal*.

In 1859 a number of the poorer families in the villages, deciding that they would be better off under the old system, revived communism and established a Bruderhof which they named *Hutterdorf*. When in the early seventies the German colonists of south Russia lost their military exemption and other special economic and political privileges so generously granted them in the former century, the Hutterites, those living under communism as well as those living in separate homes, decided to follow the Mennonites to America, a new land of freedom. The Hutterdorf communists came first in 1874; followed by Hutterthal and Johannesruh in 1877; and finally by all the rest in 1879. All these settled in the James river valley in the Dakotas, some establishing communistic Bruderhofs; and others settling on individual farms.

VIII

RUSSIA

CATHERINE'S QUEST FOR MODEL FARMERS

To the student of Mennonite affairs, the story of the Mennonites of Russia furnishes a pleasant relief from that of their brethren in the other countries heretofore mentioned. Instead of bitter persecution and relentless oppression, their common lot elsewhere, the Mennonites meet here in the land of the most arbitrary ruler of all Europe the greatest encouragement to expand their settlements, and the widest liberty to practise their beliefs according to their convictions. The course of their unhampered development also suggests the direction Mennonitism may sometimes take when it is free to apply its principles, economic and religious, to every day living.

Catherine's invitation to the Danzig and West Prussian Mennonites to locate on her crown lands in South Russia came at a most opportune time. The empress who in 1763, had succeeded to the crown of all the Russias, although unprincipled and savagely cruel as a woman, but nevertheless shrewd, and farsighted as a ruler, did much for the political and economic development of her vast empire. Regarding agriculture as the backbone of national prosperity, according to the economic theories of the time, she became very much interested in settling her unoccupied agricultural lands, of which she had millions of acres along the Black and Caspian seas, recently won from the Sultan of Turkey, with industrious and thrifty farmers—land still unoccupied except by scattered

bands of half civilized Nomadic tribes of Tartar origin. Since the native Russian peasants and serfs were neither available nor entirely satisfactory as settlers for these raw, semi-arid regions, she turned elsewhere for more suitable prospective colonists.

Soon after her accession, the ambitious empress advertised the advantages of her crown lands far and wide throughout Europe, wherever people were hampered in their religious liberties, or were dissatisfied with their economic or political status, offering most liberal inducements to prospective agricultural colonists—such as free lands in abundance, free transportation and support until such time as the settlers should be established in their own homes, tax exemption for a limited time, exemption from military duty and certain civil obligations, religious toleration, and wide liberty in establishing such educational and local political institutions as best suited their needs—privileges far beyond those enjoyed by the native Russians themselves.¹

Typical of a number of early colonies established on the basis of these liberal terms was a group of Moravian Brethren, who located near the Mohammedan frontier along the lower Volga in 1763, attracted no doubt more by the prospects of a promising missionary field among the Tartars, than by the desire to better their economic condition. Few of these numerous early attempts at colonization were successful. But with the appointment, in 1774, of Prince Potempkin, successful general in the Turkish wars, and one of Catherine's favorites, as Gov-

1 The term colonist as applied here and throughout this chapter has reference only to the foreigners, mostly Germans—Mennonites and others—who were invited by Catherine and her successors, to locate on the frontier areas of Russia under special inducements. There were many German and other foreigners in Russia who did not settle on farms in colonies in response to special inducements. Such are not included in this chapter under the caption of "colonists."

ernor General of South Russia, a more vigorous and successful colonization policy began. Among the various projects sponsored by the Governor General during this period was the invitation, extended in 1786 through George von Trappe, a Russian colonization agent of German extraction, to certain discontented citizens of the city of Danzig at the time of the first partitioning of Poland.

In this invitation the oppressed Mennonites of Danzig and West Prussia were included. At the suggestion of von Trappe the Mennonite churches decided to send two representatives, Johan Hoepfner, and Jacob Bartsch, at Russian expense, to spy out the promised land.

These devoted men set out in the summer of 1786, on what all their brethren at that time considered a long and perilous journey. Sailing to Riga, then crossing over to the Dnieper, they reached a station called Dubrowna in late November. From here they sailed down the river, looking for a desirable settling place. At Kremenschug they met Potempkin, and in May of the following year, they were presented to Catherine herself, who was on her first tour of inspection to her newly won territories. After selecting a desirable location near Berislav along the Dnieper, not far from where that stream flows into the sea, a rich level plain, quite similar to the lowlands of their own Vistula delta, as a promising site for their prospective settlements, the deputies started on their way homeward, returning, however, by way of St. Petersburg, where they met various government officials, including Crown Prince Paul, and secured official confirmation of the promises made them by von Trappe. They reached Danzig after a year's absence, in the summer of 1787, without any serious mishaps except that Bartsch had frozen his toes during the winter, and Hoepfner had delayed their return by several months because of a broken leg.

The favorable reports about the promised land brought back by the deputies, supplemented by a vigorous campaign for colonists on the part of von Trappe, who in the meantime had been appointed official director of the proposed enterprise, aroused keen interest, among both the Danzig and Prussian Mennonites in the emigration movement. The wiley von Trappe, in his eagerness to serve his Russian masters was none too scrupulous in the methods used for winning support for his cause. To secure the aid of one of the Danzig elders, Peter Epp, he presented the elder with a personal gift. Forbidden by the elders, who had been instructed by the Danzig authorities not to permit public solicitation for emigrants, to appear publicly before the congregations in behalf of his project, von Trappe accomplished his end without violating the letter of the law by stationing himself outside the church door, handing out his circulars to the congregation as they passed out. The elders, too, who were in sympathy with the emigration project, could also thus truthfully say to the Danzig magistrate that there was no solicitation with their consent.

THE CHORTITZ SETTLEMENT

A party of four families had already left for Riga before the deputies returned, and it was reported that hundreds of families were ready to depart immediately.²

² Numerous accounts are available of this early emigration to Russia. Perhaps one of the most reliable is the study made by Dr. David G. Rempel, of Leland Stanford University, who in addition to the various general accounts, had access to original Russian material in the Hoover War Library, as well as to other Russian documents and papers in Russia. I have drawn frequently from Dr. Rempel's doctor's thesis, still in manuscript, but to appear in print some time, for many facts on the early migration not found in the general accounts. Without giving special references, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Rempel's manuscript for numerous facts mentioned in this chapter.

But neither the Danzig nor Prussian authorities, however eager they may have been to make the further expansion of the Mennonite settlements impossible, yet they were not anxious to lose to their Russian rivals any of their prosperous farmers or industrious laborers. Passports were thus denied to all prospective emigrants who had property, and granted only to the poor. By the fall of 1788 two hundred and twenty-eight families, nearly all from the poorer working classes of Danzig, and mostly from the Flemish branch of the church, had gathered at Dubrowna, having arrived here by the same route taken by the deputies two years before. Here they were forced to encamp for the winter, both because of the lateness of the season, and also because of renewed warfare between Russia and Turkey along the frontier farther south.

The enforced stay for the winter at Dubrowna of this band of exiles was not a happy one. Poverty stricken, largely supported at government expense, awaiting an uncertain future during a long cold winter in temporary shelters, and homesick, their prospects seemed none too bright. Added to these material discomforts, there was a certain degree of religious unrest due to the rivalry of the two religious factions represented—Flemish and Frisian; and the lack of a preacher to minister to their spiritual needs.

This troublesome Frisian-Flemish division had been imported from Holland to Danzig and Prussia several hundred years before; and the rift between the two groups even now, in the period of their Russian exile, was as wide as ever. Even intermarriage between the two factions was forbidden on pain of excommunication. But more disturbing still was the strange fact that among a thousand pious souls who had left their Danzig home largely to escape religious oppression, there wasn't a preacher among them. It was customary at this time

among the Mennonites everywhere to choose their ministers by lot from the laity, and they were to serve without pay. It was usual, consequently, to choose them from the class that could afford to serve, the well-to-do class, generally the thrifty farmers. But the well-to-do among the Danzig Mennonites were denied passports. Even the elders of the home churches in a meeting at Rosenort held before the departure of the emigrants, could find no one suitable in the whole body worthy of assuming spiritual leadership, undoubtedly because of their economic status. And so this first group of pioneers had to leave for their new home religiously unorganized and spiritually shepherdless.

Worship service, of course, could be read by a layman from a book of sermons, a practise still quite common at that time in most of the Mennonite churches; but only an elder could administer the rites of communion and baptism, and perform marriage ceremonies. Ten young couples at Dubrowna, ripe for marriage, added urgency to the demand for an ordained elder. An elder, however, among the Mennonites, who believed strongly in descent by Apostolic succession, could be installed only in person by another regularly ordained elder. The home Flemish church to whom a request had been sent for an elder, after a meeting of elders in which no one was found willing or able to make the long journey to Russia, suggested to the brethren at Dubrowna that they send a list of satisfactory candidates for the ministry from which a selection might be made, by lot no doubt, by the Prussian elders, and authorized by written confirmation. This was done, and three ministers were thus selected including Bernhard Penner, who a little later was also ordained as the first elder in Russia by the same procedure.

In the meantime, with the coming of spring the Dubrowna exiles continued their journey down the river to

their destination, the more prosperous on their own wagons by land, the poorer by river barge. But on the way they were doomed to another crushing disappointment. The deputies were informed by Potempkin that instead of proceeding to the fertile fields chosen for them two years before at Bereslav, near which the Turkish wars were still raging, they would have to settle on lands farther up the river, near a small tributary called Chortitz, a region that turned out to be far less desirable than the original site farther south.³

Great was the disappointment of the weary colonists, when upon their final arrival at Chortitz, in July of 1789, they first sighted the bare and hilly waste that was to be their new home, their promised land. What they saw, instead of the flat fertile fields, like those in their own Vistula delta, such as the deputies had promised them, there was a wide, rocky barren steppe, cut through with deep gullies, filled at that season of the year with patches of dried up grass; no sign of a living thing anywhere, much less of human habitation save the wreck of a deserted palace, the remains of one of the ghost villages erected by Potempkin some time before to impress the empress with the growing prosperity of her new crown lands.

Such was the disappointment of these lonely home-seekers that a small group, the most discontented, refused to unpack their goods, hoping that at the last minute the Russian government might relent and offer them a more promising site. Others, more optimistic, including the two deputies, pronouncing the land good, immediately began the erection of their more or less temporary homes. When it finally became evident that no other location was

3 It is suggested by some writers that Potempkin arbitrarily suggested this new site because it included some of his own land for which he desired good farmers.

forthcoming, even the discontented were forced to dig in for the winter, and gradually adapted themselves to their new situation.

These first temporary living quarters, of course, were mere makeshifts of real homes. While both Hoeppner and Bartsch were able to erect rather substantial dwellings, the rest were not so fortunate. The building material promised by the government was slow in arriving. Many of them erected crude sod shanties, partly below and partly above ground, with thatched roofs; others set up temporary tents; a few of the most dissatisfied colonists remained in their wagons for the time being. A number had to be cared for during the following winter in the nearby government barracks at Alexandrowsk.

This first fall and winter was a trying one for the pioneer settlement. The improvised huts offered but little shelter against the unexpected heavy fall rains and the winter winds. The scant food furnished by the government consisted largely of a broth made from mouldy rye flour secured from distant public supply granaries. The money promised for their support, now that the colonists had safely reached their destination, was slow in coming, much of it finding its way into the pockets of greedy public officials. The country round about, not far removed from the frontier, abounded in thieving natives, who had little regard for property rights. These pilferers stole the building material meant for the colonists as it floated down the river, and appropriated their personal belongings. The baggage which had been sent down from Dubrowna on river barges was carelessly handled, and such as had not been completely ruined by the rains, was pillaged of its contents; trunks and boxes had been broken open, and clothing, personal effects and precious heirlooms were taken out and exchanged for stones or other useless freight.

On the occasion of their first communion service the next spring held in an old abandoned building, under the ministry of their newly selected elder, Bernhard Penner, the elder was sorely grieved because, owning only a pair of *Bastelschue*, the usual footwear of the average poor Russians and also of the colonists at this time, he keenly felt the humility of officiating on this solemn occasion without the Scriptural boots prescribed for the Mennonite elders of his day.⁴ Finally several of the more prosperous members of his flock, after diligent search, gathered together a pair of boots for the elder so that he might administer this sacred duty in the proper manner. Loud were the sobs, it is said, that swept through the audience as the participants in this first communion service were reminded in their present miserable situation of the happy homes they had left behind in the Vistula lowlands. *Blut arm an Leib und Seele* one chronicler calls them.

In the meantime, becoming convinced of the fact that this was to be their permanent home under any conditions, favorable or otherwise, the settlers began the distribution of the land among the heads of the families. At first, following their Prussian custom, each family started to live on its own farm; but the need for protection against marauders drove them to settle in small groups, some fifteen to thirty families to a village. Eight villages were thus laid out in the beginning, with *Chortitz* as the center of the settlement; and the others with such local descrip-

4 "Bastel Schue", or sandals, were made of a single piece of leather untanned, or sometimes, according to J. H. Janzen, of Waterloo, Ontario, of "the inner rind of the spruce or lime tree," and tied together with a string. Russian Mennonite preachers interpreted literally the admonition in Ephesians 6:15. The German word *gestiefelt* is much more easily turned into *booted* than the English translation *shod*. Among the Old Colonists, formerly in Manitoba, but now in Mexico, a Mennonite elder in good standing must still be shod with high topped boots, and trousers tucked in.

tive names as *Rosental*; or reminders of their Prussian homes—*Einlage*, *Neuenberg*, and *Schoenhorst*.

The hardships of this first winter continued for some years. Many of the first colonists, being city laborers, knew nothing about farming; and those who came from the farms discovered that the farm methods used on their Vistula swamps were not applicable to the dry and barren steppe lands along the Chortitz. Grasshoppers, drouth, and inexperience made the first years lean ones. Material poverty, too, was matched with spiritual discontent. The disgruntled element which had never become completely reconciled to their lot, seeking justification for their disappointment, attacked especially the two deputies as the cause of most of their trouble, charging them especially with having betrayed their trust, accepting government money which was meant for all the settlers, and with erecting finer homes than the rest could afford.⁵

So bitter was the feeling that had been worked up against these men that both were excommunicated from the Flemish church of which they were members. With the connivance of corrupt Russian officials, Hoepfner's enemies even had him arrested and put in prison, only to see him released, however, sometime later. Bartsch, after making the customary confession required by the church of its backsliders, was again reinstated into full membership in his congregation. Hoepfner was not so easily satisfied. He affiliated himself with the Frisian branch of the church and became a citizen of the nearby

5 The deputies evidently were promised and granted a reward by the Russian government for the part they played in the promotion of the colonization project, and no doubt they received some special favors for this service. Incidentally such disputes are common in every colonization enterprise. A number of the leaders in the immigration movement to America, in 1874, received similar favors from American railroad companies and Canadian land departments; and were likewise severally criticized by their fellow immigrants for accepting them.

city of Alexandrowsk. Just before his death he requested that he be buried on his private estate, and not in the common cemetery by the side of his fellow colonists who had made him so much trouble in his early career. But time is a great healer of wounds. In 1889, on the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the colony, the great-grandchildren of the men who had thrown Hoepfner into jail erected a marble shaft to his memory on the spot of his burial.

The question of an apostolically ordained elder also remained a matter of dispute for some time. Elder Penner, before his death in 1791, had ordained a successor in the person of one David Epp. But there were still a number of the more conservative members of the church who, because Penner had not been personally ordained according to the traditions of the church, refused to recognize either Penner or his successor as a legitimate elder. This controversy, together with the charges against the two deputies, kept the churches in a religious turmoil for several years.

The demand that the home church send an authorized elder to settle these controversies finally bore fruit. In 1794 the Flemish congregations of Prussia at last dispatched elder Cornelius Regier, from the Heubuden congregation, and Cornelius Warkentin to the distracted congregations along the Dnieper. These emissaries of good will were accorded a hearty welcome by both the Flemish and Frisian groups. They held numerous conferences with opposing factions, received a number of young members into both churches by baptism, and did much to restore harmony among the various quarrelling factions; but they were not successful in healing the breach with the two deputies. Elder Regier died within a few months. Before his death, however, he had installed his travelling companion, Cornelius Warkentin, as elder, who remained

with the pioneer settlement for several years, doing much during that period to reconcile the colonists to their new home, and placing the religious life of the community on a safe basis.⁶

In spite of the prospects of financial poverty and spiritual decadence, however, in the new home, emigration from the delta congregations did not abate. When Danzig was annexed to Prussia in the second partitioning of Poland, many of the Mennonites of both Danzig and Prussia, preferred the uncertainties of Russia to those of Prussia. Between 1793 and 1797, one hundred and eighteen additional families, more prosperous than the first party had been, mostly farmers, and largely from the Frisian persuasion, found their way to the frontier settlement. Some of these remained for a time among the earlier established communities; the rest established two new villages, *Kronsgarten* and *Schoenwiese*. Others followed. In the meantime, too, a new migration had begun to the new colony farther south on the Molotschna. By 1824 some four hundred families had located in the Chortitz colony, grouped into eighteen villages, at a cost to the Russian government of several hundred thousand dollars.

Meanwhile in 1796, Catherine died, to be succeeded by her son Paul. The Chortitz colonists, concerned for their special privileges under a new ruler, sent a delegation to St. Petersburg for the purpose of securing a written guarantee from the new ruler that their former liberties might be continued. After an extended stay in the capital city, the delegates returned, in 1800, with the

6 That the Russian government which was concerned that this early colonization experiment should not fail, greatly appreciated the work of Warkentin in establishing harmony among the factions is shown by the fact that, in 1804, it presented the elder with an official medal in recognition of his services to the Chortitz colony, and also for his aid in promoting the later colony to the Molotschna.

precious document in their possession, guaranteeing for both old and new settlers all the exemptions and privileges granted the original colonists, and several new ones added, the most important being—175 acres of free land to each family, religious toleration, exemption from military and certain civil services, and from the use of the oath in all judicial processes, wide liberty in establishing their own schools in their own language, and such political and economic institutions as might be most suitable to their own needs, the right of forbidding the erection of taverns in their midst, and the right to manufacture their own beverages, a concession usually only granted noblemen. Continued support was granted of course to future immigrants, though this was not a specific promise in the new charter of privileges.⁷

All colonists, too, during this period, were placed under certain restrictions, though these were not specifically mentioned in the above charter. While religious toleration was fully granted, proselyting among members of the orthodox state church was forbidden. Since the special privileges were granted to specific groups, the privileges in question would be annulled when the privileged person left the group. Children of mixed marriages would take the status of the non-privileged parent. Since the colonists were invited in as model farmers, the model farm of 175 acres could not be divided by inheritance but must remain intact. Title to the land was not unlimited, and could not be sold without the consent of the village.

THE MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

Encouraged by these written guarantees, and at the same time driven by new restrictions upon their religious

⁷ This precious document was carefully kept in a vault among other archives of the colony, but with many other important documents was used for wrapping paper by the Bolsheviks in the early days of the revolution.

liberties and economic privileges by the king of Prussia to seek relief elsewhere, the Prussian Mennonites again revived their interest in the migration to south Russia. Whole villages decided to leave. The movement began in the summer of 1803 with the departure of one hundred and sixty-two families, to be followed the next year by a group of about equal size. The Russian government, which continued its interest in further colonization, in the meantime had set apart for the Mennonite settlers a tract of land of about three hundred thousand acres on a fertile, treeless plain, in the province⁸ of Taurida, south of Chortitz, along the Molotschna, a small stream running parallel with the Dnieper and flowing into the sea of Azov. Most of these colonists were from the region of Marienburg and Elbing, and were rather well to do farmers. After paying the ten percent emigration tax, they still had enough capital left with which to stock up their new farms. Only a small minority had to accept the help of the Russian government still offered poor immigrants. This immigration movement continued for some years. Each year found long wagon trains loaded with household furniture and farm equipment, crossing Poland and south Russia by way of their Chortitz brethren to their new settlement on the Molotschna. By 1820 some six hundred families had found their way to this colony; and during the next twenty years four hundred more. By 1840, forty-six villages had been established with a total population of about ten thousand. By this time, however, the Russian government had practically ceased to offer its earlier generous inducements to prospective foreign colonists.

Like their Chortitz brethren, the Molotschnaites

⁸ The term "Province" is used in this chapter instead of the word "Gubernia", the official title of the political departments or divisions into which the empire was divided.

named many of their villages after their Prussian homes. *Halbstadt* became and remained afterwards the center of the new colony. Other Prussian namesakes were *Tiegenhagen*, *Ladekopp*, *Rosenort*, *Tiege*, and *Ohrloff*. Among the more important of the numerous later villages to be founded were *Alexanderwohl* settled in 1820, and *Gnadenfeld* some time afterwards. The former was composed of an entire church congregation which had migrated in a body from Poland, near Swetz, under the leadership of their elder, Peter Wedel. Tradition has it that on their way to Molotschna they met the Czar Alexander on one of his itineraries among his subjects, who, on learning their destination, wished them well, whereupon they named their later settlement *Alexanderwohl*.

This congregation and village belonged to the old Groningen conservative wing of the church, tracing its origin through Prussia to the Old Groningen Society in Holland. In 1874 most of the congregation again migrated as a body to the plains of Kansas, where they established another *Alexanderwohl*. *Gnadenfeld*, likewise, consisted of an organized church congregation which harked back to the Old Flemish wing in Holland; and which found its way to south Russia by a series of treks during the centuries through Poland, West Prussia, and the Margrave of Brandenburg. The *Gnadenfeld* congregation became the center, during the middle of the past century, of a vigorous missionary movement and a religious revival that finally swept through the whole Mennonite settlement of south Russia.

The Molotschna settlers, as already intimated, being better farmers, and blessed with greater material prosperity than their fellow Mennonites in Chortitz, were spared much of the economic hardships of the latter. Taganrog, on an arm of the Azov, furnished a ready market for their dairy products during the early years

until wheat growing became an important industry. Then, too, since they brought their preachers with them they escaped the early years of religious anarchy which marred the peace of their fellow Mennonites to the north.

Although more prosperous materially, and more peaceful spiritually, the new colonists were not spared the usual dangers of pioneer settlements. Their colony was located far out on a treeless steppe, well on the outskirts of civilization, nearer the frontier than the Chortitz colony. Just to the south were still to be found bands of half savage, nomadic Tartars, not yet reconciled to their removal by government order from the Molotschna valley to make room for the German Mennonites; and who, for that reason, hated these newcomers as did our Indians the American frontiersmen. They often raided the Mennonite settlement, driving off the settlers' horses and cattle. Steppe riding to protect their property against these marauders became a thrilling adventure for many a young Mennonite during this early period. After one of these raids by the Tartars had resulted in the death of four Mennonites, the Russian government took more drastic measures against the tribesmen, forbidding them the right to carry their usual weapons—long poles, spiked and weighted at the ends, weapons used on their hunting expeditions. Later on, however, natives and Mennonites lived side by side on friendly terms, until the middle of the past century when the former were crowded out to newer frontiers to the southeast.

OTHER PRUSSIAN GROUPS

In addition to the two large Mennonite colonies just described, several smaller groups had located within the Czarist Russian empire during this period. These, together with several congregations originally in Poland, but who, after the partitioning of that unhappy nation,

found themselves under Russian jurisdiction, may be roughly divided into three groups.

1. Prussian colonies which migrated independently of the two larger settlements.

a. *Deutsch-Kazun*, and *Deutsch-Wymisle*, along the Vistula near Warsaw, were daughter colonies of the Graudenz and Culm congregations in West Prussia. They were founded during the latter part of the eighteenth century, when that region was still under Polish jurisdiction, but found themselves within the Czar's empire when the final partitioning took place. A number of the members of these congregations emigrated to the Molotschna settlement during the nineteenth century; and from there some of them finally found their way to America.

b. The settlement at *Deutsch-Michalin* near Maknofka, on the western border of the province of Kiev, just across from Volhynia, was composed of Prussians, who had migrated to that region about the same time the first colony came to Chortitz. In 1802 many of these Michaliner, dissatisfied with their land contracts, moved over into Volhynia, near Ostrog, where they finally developed a number of villages including *Karoldswald*, *Antonofka*, *Waldheim*, and *Fuerstlandsdorf*. They were granted small farms here on the estate of a nobleman, on terms quite similar to those offered the large colonies on the Crown lands at Chortitz and Molotschna. This small group did not prosper as well, however, as those who remained at Michalin. They remained poor throughout their stay in Russia, devoting themselves largely to small farming, dairying, linen weaving, and day labor in neighboring cities. They were influenced more than any other Mennonite group by their unwholesome Polish environ-

ment; at the time of their American emigration, in the early seventies of the past century, they were among the least prosperous, and the most backward both religiously and socially of all those who found their way to the new world. Neither of these groups, it will be noted, were "colonists" in the real sense—that is, they were not located on Russian frontier territory under the special inducements offered by the Russian government.

c. *Samara.* The failure of the Russian constitution of 1850 to provide for military exemption on religious grounds caused considerable anxiety among certain of the more scrupulous Mennonites of West Prussia. After vainly petitioning the Berlin government for a reinstatement of their ancient privileges, these decided upon emigration to Russia. But after the special inducements offered the earlier Mennonite colonists, it was extremely doubtful whether more Mennonites would be welcomed by the Czar's government. Finally, however, permission was secured to locate a limited number of settlers along the Volga, in the province of Samara, on terms still quite liberal, though no longer as generous as those offered the first colonies. A large compact area of land was offered the Mennonites on easy terms; freedom from military service for twenty years, after which each colonist was to pay a special exemption tax; each family to deposit three hundred and fifty thaler with the Russian embassy at Berlin as surety that they would not prove a burden to the Russian government.

Two settlements were finally established in this region. The first was located in what was known as the "Tract" in 1855,⁹ under the leadership of one Claas Epp. This colony was given the name *Koeppental* after one of

⁹ The Salt Tract was a wide road leading from the salt mines in the south to the settlements in the interior. This settlement, therefore, was always spoken of as the "Tract" settlement.

the Russian officials who had been especially helpful in its establishment. In the course of the next twenty years it expanded into ten villages with such names as *Hahn-sau*, *Ohrloff*, etc. The second settlement was begun in 1859, not far from the first, at *Alexandertal*, and likewise expanded during the next fifteen years into ten villages. The latter, however, were granted privileges slightly less liberal than the former. The settlers had to buy their land from the Crown; military exemption before the paying of the special exemption tax was to run for only three years. Several hundred families migrated to these two Samara colonies during the period, nearly all from West Prussia, and most of them fairly well to do when they came.

2. Non Prussian Groups.

a. Among the Mennonite settlements in Russia, not of Prussian origin was a group of *Swiss* who had migrated to Polish Russia from Galicia before the close of the eighteenth century. They had originally come to Galicia from the Palatinate, and Montbeliard, France; and by 1785, had settled in Polish Russia among the earlier group of Hutterites and Prussian congregations. They were of original Amish descent, and seemingly had some difficulty in fitting in with other groups. After considerable shifting from place to place in Russia some of them finally found a resting place at *Eduardsdorf*, near Dubna, in the province of Volhynia in 1815. By 1837 two more congregations were established—*Horodischtz* and *Waldheim*. In 1861 the *Eduardsdorf* congregation moved to the east side of the province, near Jitomir, and founded the new settlement of *Kotosufka*. These were all of the same group that had originally located in Galicia, some of whom had remained in that Austrian province. Their Swiss origin is shown by such common names as *Krehbiel*,

Schrag, Rupp, Stuckey, Kaufman, Flickinger, Miller, Graber, Goering, etc.

b. *Hutterites*. The Russian experiences of this group has been told in an earlier chapter.

3. Daughter Colonies

All these early pioneer settlements in the course of time outgrew their original land allotments, and thus were forced to found daughter and granddaughter colonies for their surplus population. Up to about 1870 several small colonies were established, always aided by the mother colony, in nearby Ukrainian territory; but after that, and especially after 1890, migration of the surplus population, and occasionally of the more religiously conscientious followed, like our own western pioneers, the frontier line of cheap lands, southeast into the Caucasus-Kuban and Terek provinces; east toward the Urals in Ufa, Samara and Orenburg; and beyond into Tomsk and Tobolsk, in western Siberia; and into Asiatic Turkestan. Among these daughter colonies might be mentioned *Bergthal* (1836), *Crimea* (1862), *Fuerstenland* (1864), *Borsenko* (1865), *Sagradofka* (1871), *Memrik* (1885), *New Samara* (1890), *Orenburg* (1894), *Terek* (1901), *West Siberia* (1909).

NUMBER OF ORIGINAL COLONISTS

As to the number of Mennonite immigrants who came to the original colonies from Prussia and elsewhere by 1870, students of the movement are not agreed; but perhaps an estimate of nine thousand is not far wrong. Of these at least seven thousand located in the Chortitz and Molotschna colonies, and perhaps eight thousand were Prussians. By this time, 1870, the original numbers had increased to about forty-five thousand. Exclusive of the

eighteen thousand that had migrated to America during the seventies, forty daughter colonies had been established by 1914 with a total population in all settlements of about one hundred thousand occupying a land area of nearly three million acres—a total land complex, three times the size of the state of Rhode Island.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROGRESS

Early Agricultural Life

As already suggested, these early colonists, both Danzig artisans and Prussian farmers, formed themselves into village groups averaging from fifteen to thirty families each. Following their Prussian style of architecture, they placed house, barn, stable and shop all under one roof, gable end facing the front, and located along one wide street which at first became lined with some sort of fruit trees, but in course of time with poplar or other fast growing shade trees. The front yard became a flower garden, and the rear a fruit orchard and truck patch. The first buildings were rudely constructed of mud walls and thatched roofs, but later replaced by substantial structures of wood or brick.

Stretching out and away from the village over the treeless steppes were the arable farm lands; and the common pastures where the village cattle were herded, or where the municipal sheep flocks were sometimes kept until such time as the common land might be turned into grainfields as the growing population demanded. While each head of a family was entitled to its one hundred and seventy-five acres, the land was divided for farming purposes into a number of long, narrow strips radiating from the village, so distributed among the farmers that each might share equally in the good and bad land wherever there was a difference in its fertility.

These strips were frequently redistributed. No farmer thus cultivated his own land. The government in the original contract forbade the sale of land to outsiders, also the division of the farm upon the death of the owner. It had to be kept intact, and taken over by one member of the family. Mennonites were invited to Russia as master farmers; and a model farm supposedly needed to contain approximately one hundred and seventy-five acres. This seems the more reasonable when we remember that originally it was thought that sheep raising might be the principal source of income rather than wheat growing. In the Volga region, where the Mennonite colonists had been granted fewer special concessions than in the earlier colonies, title rested in the village as in the Russian mir, instead of the head of the family as in the south Russian colonies. In reality, it was only the use, rather than the ownership of land, that was granted the settler.

It was but natural that a group, so closely knit together religiously and economically as were these Mennonite colonies, should engage in a number of cooperative and communal enterprises. Neither of the two original settlements distributed all the land granted by the Russian government, but retained a certain amount which at first was used for common pasture land, and later leased to farmers. The income was used to build up a fund with which the surplus population some time later might be helped to found a daughter colony. The daughter colonies later in turn repeated the procedure. Each village, too, while in no way committed to socialistic theories or practises, yet engaged in a number of communal enterprises, including among others a common granary filled in prosperous years for the use of the poor in times of emergency; for the steppes of south Russia, and with an annual rainfall of less than fifteen inches, were occasionally subject to drouth and crop failure. In 1820 the muni-

cial sheep flock of the Old Colony consisted of a thousand fine Merinos, while the income from the public ferry across the Dnieper amounted to two and three thousand rubles annually. The municipal distillery in that year netted a substantial revenue also for the common treasury.

At first these pioneer farmers, transplanted from the fertile soil and abundant rainfall of the Vistula delta to the dry and barren steppes of south Russia, found considerable difficulty in adapting their farming methods to the requirements of their new environment. It took years of experimentation before they learned how to combat drought, grasshoppers and occasional crop failures. They occupied themselves in the first years chiefly with stock raising, sheep breeding, and such general farming as was required to meet their home demands. The silk industry for a while assumed some importance, which accounts for the large number of mulberry trees planted along the highways and around the fields in the first two colonies. Flax and tobacco, and bee culture in their turn all gave promise for a time of becoming substantial sources of income. Fruits and vegetables, and especially water melons, (arbusen) found a ready market in the larger cities nearby. With the opening of the seaport Berdiansk on the Black Sea in the middle thirties wheat growing began to replace sheep raising and silk and bee culture.

Farming methods were most primitive. Farm implements were of the crudest sort. Seeding, harvesting, and threshing were all done by hand; and labor in the early years as in all pioneer settlements was scarce. An early sign of progress was the substitution for the flail of a large cylindrical threshing stone drawn over the threshing floor by horses or oxen. The grain was stored in the attic over the living room, while the straw was used to

thatch the roof, or left to rot sufficiently to furnish fuel the following year for the large brick heating oven, which was so built into the house as to serve both as an oven and a furnace.^{9a}

This description of the early arrangements of course applies especially to the two original colonies of south Russia. Different agricultural conditions prevailed in the later settlements along the colder Ural highlands in the north and west Siberia, and in the arid Caucasus where irrigation was practised.

By 1830 the experimental agricultural stage was ended. In that year some of the more farsighted and public spirited farmers, encouraged by the *Fuersorge-Komitee*¹⁰ of Odessa, organized a semi-official association called *The Agricultural Improvement Society*, but which perhaps might more appropriately be named *Agricultural Commission*, since it had some government support. The first president of this commission was a prosperous farmer of the Molotschna colony by the name of Johan Cornies. Under the presidency of Carnies the organization exerted far reaching influence during the next twenty years, not only upon the farming methods of the Mennonite colonies, but later on upon their whole economic and social life.

Cornies, who remained at the head of this society until his death in 1848, was already a successful big scale farmer at the time of his appointment. He conducted many experiments and developed many farm methods now well known to scientific agriculture. He became known far and wide as an agricultural expert, and his big estate on the Iuschanlee became a show place for

9a Straw was also used fresh for fuel.

10 A Board of Trustees appointed by the Russian government stationed at Odessa, supported by all the German colonists—Mennonite and non-Mennonite, whose function it was to supervise the whole political, and to a certain extent, the economic life of the colonists.

travellers through south Russia, being visited by many government officials, including both Alexander I, and Alexander II, when they were still Crown Princes. In the course of time Cornies accumulated a large amount of property, some of which was given him by the government as a gift in return for his services. At the time of his death he held over nine hundred acres of land with a flock of eight thousand imported Merino sheep, four hundred horses, and a large herd of thoroughbred cattle.

The work of the commission was later extended to other colonies, and was not confined to the Mennonites only, but included service for neighboring Jewish, Russian, and even Tartar settlements in the hope that these backward farmers also might imbibe some of the better farm methods from their model Mennonite neighbors. Among some of the results secured through the efforts of Cornies and his society were the practise of fallowing¹¹ and dry farming; the use of fertilizers, the unsuccessful promotion of silk culture and tobacco, the four year rotation of crops, the breeding of improved strains of live stock, the introduction of more efficient farm machinery, the erection of more practical farm buildings, and the planting of shade and fruit trees, especially the mulberry tree for the silk growers.

As the influence of the commission grew, it was granted additional governmental recognition, and authority beyond its original field of farm improvement, some of which was often rather arbitrarily enforced by its somewhat dictatorial head. More and more supervision of the schools was also turned over to this body, and to a certain extent local poor relief, and child welfare. Model school houses were built. The poorer colonists were induced to work for the more prosperous. Neglected children, of whom there were not many, were provided

11 In German *Schwartzbrach*.

for. The organization was even influential in securing regulations compelling the lazy to seek work. Many of these arbitrary regulations, strictly enforced, aroused the animosity of those affected; but that the work of the society and its chief promoter was of enduring benefit to the Mennonite colonists there can be little doubt. The commission continued its work even after the death of Cornies, though less effectively, until well into the seventies of the century, when colonists of south Russia lost many of their special privileges, and the peculiar institutions for safeguarding them were abolished by the government.

The Land Question

Although there was little industrial development among the colonists during the early part of the century, yet nearly every village was a self-sufficient economic unit, with smiths, carpenters, shoemakers and countless other artisans, some of whom divided their time between farming and their avocation. Farming however remained the chief occupation. Industry was merely supplementary.

Aided by the Agricultural Commission, the colonists in both Chortitz and Molotschna enjoyed a steady economic growth; and in course of time converted the treeless plains into flourishing fields, orchards and pastures covered with wide expanses of wheat, and filled with fine herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. By the middle of the century the colonies, as well as the private estates outside, had accumulated wealth far beyond that of their native Russian neighbors. The Volga colonies at this time were still in the pioneer stage, and had not yet reached the same degree of prosperity. The Swiss of Volhynia were also fairly well off; but the Mennonites in Polish Russia

had not kept pace with their brethren elsewhere in their pursuit of either material or cultural advancement.

Even the most prosperous settlements, however, were not without their economic troubles. Population pressure by 1870 had become a serious problem in both Chortitz and Molotschna. Up to 1840 there seemed to be no dearth of tillable land for all the families that desired to enter their government allotments. But after that, rapid population increase, and the government provision that the entire estate must pass intact to a single member of the family upon the death of the former owner, worked a hardship upon those members of the family who did not share the land inheritance. These latter had either to purchase land elsewhere, frequently possible, of course, though not always, work as farm laborers, often for a more fortunate brother, seek labor in some village industry or other line of effort. Especially after all the available estates had been distributed among the first settlers in the two colonies, the number of landless grew rapidly with the increase of population. By 1870 it is estimated that at least two-thirds of all heads of families in both colonies were without land. Many of these were granted a small patch of ground upon which to build a house and make a living as best they could; and were spoken of as *Anwohner*.

A solution of this problem was sought quite early in the purchase of daughter colonies as an outlet for the surplus population, an early example of which was the settling of Bergthal by the excess population from Chortitz; Molotschna and later settlements made similar purchases all through the century. Sometimes well to do farmers bought estates outside the settlements. Occasionally, groups of settlers would locate as tenants on private estates of some nobleman. Up to the middle of the century, too, land could often be rented at a low

rate from the Nogaian tribesmen nearby. Cornies sought a remedy in encouraging the manufacturing industry in the larger villages which would furnish work for the landless.

To make matters worse, the landless had no voice in seeking a remedy for this situation. The practise of keeping the entire estate intact was a government regulation, and could not be changed. Only such as owned land had a voice in the local village assembly where all land as well as other policies were determined. Too often the landholders used this monopolistic privilege to their own advantage. Surplus land, which was the property of the entire colony, and which might have been divided up into small farms to meet the demands of the landless, was often leased by the village authorities to rich landlords instead at a ridiculously low rental for sheep raising. No help could be expected from the ministers either; for since the ministry was unsalaried, they were usually chosen too frequently with an eye to their financial standing, rather than to their qualifications of spiritual leadership; and thus their interests likely would be with the land owners.

This situation naturally bred a great deal of discontent among the poorer classes, and ran a dividing line through the population on the basis of land ownership, often cutting straight through the ties of domestic kinship. The cleavage finally became so well defined that the landless party organized, and in the early sixties petitioned the Russian government for relief. Their program demanded the distribution of the remaining common land; permission to divide the full estates into smaller units with the right to vote; and the purchase by the mother colonies of new lands for the benefit of the landless. After considerable opposition on the part of the landed interests, and the usual red tape on the

part of the Russian authorities, a measure of relief was finally provided by the government. It was recommended that the large estates where necessary might be divided into half and even quarter estates, $32\frac{1}{2}$ and $16\frac{1}{4}$ dessiatines respectively; that the surplus common land also be distributed in the form of small farms; that the broad highways leading from one village to another be narrowed, and the income from the sale of this land be invested in behalf of the unpropertied; and finally that all the owners of small farms be given equal voting rights with those owning full estates.

These measures finally brought some relief. By 1867 there were four hundred and twenty-five full estates, two hundred and ninety-six half estates, and fifty-one one quarter estates in Chortitz and Berghthal. In the Molotschna colony there were twelve hundred full, and three hundred and twenty-two half estates. This relief, together with the development of manufacturing in a number of the villages, the establishing of daughter colonies, and the exodus to America of a third of the entire population saved the situation for the time being from serious consequences; but the land question was never completely settled. The socialization of all land by the Bolsheviks has finally liquidated the whole problem.^{11a}

11a Since the establishing of the *Pachtartikel*, and the *Landlosen-kapital* there really was no pressing land problem any more. The capital for the landless was not only sufficient to provide the children of the poorer members with land by lot, without pay, but was even sufficient to buy land at a reasonable price for sale to such as could pay for it. The mother colony never sold such land at a profit. But by the low prices in a solid Mennonite community the wealthy people were induced to move to the new settlement and serve there as private lenders of money to the penniless, by which the latter were saved from having their land mortgaged.

Thus a new daughter colony was always settled on a fifty-fifty basis—one-half of them *Losdoerfer*, and the other half *Freikaeufer doerfer*—that is, villages in which the land

Local Government

In the management of their local affairs the Mennonites and other German colonists, were granted a large degree of local autonomy, and such political institutions as best suited their needs and desires. Each village became a governing unit for the control of schools, roads and poor relief; for the appointment of municipal herders, fire overseers, and village clerks, apportioning the arable farm lots and distributing surplus lands. At the head of each village was a magistrate called a *Schultz*, who was elected by the landowners, and had jurisdiction of petty misdemeanors. Local regulations on all these questions were passed by a town meeting composed only of those who owned land. A group of villages, at first including the whole colony, composed a district called a *Gebiet*; a superintendent called an *Oberschultz*, together with clerks and assistants, elected by the village representatives made up the *Gebietsamt* with power of administering corporal punishment, the right to hold court, and regulate such other matters of local government as concerned the villages in common. Capital offences could be tried only in the upper Russian courts. Chortitz and Molotschna each formed a separate district or *Gebiet* at first; but later Molotschna was divided into two—Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld.

Each *Gebiet* kept its own records, made its own fire regulations, provided for an insurance fund, took care of its own delinquents as well as defectives and sick, and even made its own inheritance laws, as well as many other

was given away by lot, and villages in which the land was sold to those who could afford to pay. In the beginning it was always easy to tell a *Losdorf* from a *Freikauefer dorf*; but in less than ten years there was no noticeable difference, the *Losdoerfer* having prospered sufficiently to catch up with the others. It was a great system which was finally destroyed by the Bolsheviks.—J. H. Janzen, Waterloo, Ontario.

local regulations which among their Russian neighbors were provided for by the general imperial government. In fact the Mennonites with all their special exemptions and privileges almost constituted a democratic state within an autocratic state, enjoying local autonomy far above the native Russian communities. It was an anomalous situation that could not last forever. They were hardly recognized as Russian subjects at all; some even went so far as to maintain that they had retained their Prussian nationality as well as their German culture.

The indirect supervision by the St. Petersburg government was exercised through a Supervisory Commission¹² usually headed by a German, stationed at Odessa, and directed by the department of the Interior. This commission which had general supervision of all the German colonies of South Russia, was organized by the Russian government in 1818, after several other forms of control had ended in failure. Later the Agricultural Commission in Molotschna was given a semi-official status with limited authority over agricultural and school matters; a similar institution was established in Chortitz. In the early seventies all these peculiar institutions were either abolished throughout the German colonies, or radically changed so as to place the colonists more directly under the control of the central government at St. Petersburg.

Schools

The local autonomy granted the Mennonite colonists included control over their schools. Each village at first was free to establish such schools as it pleased, or none at all if it so desired. Compulsory public school attendance was not yet required in Russia nor anywhere else

¹² *Fuersorge Komitee*.

in Europe at that time. The Mennonites, however, placed an elementary school in every village from the start, of the most primitive type to be sure, but better than those of their Russian neighbors, if indeed these latter had any at all; and perhaps not behind those in many of the enlightened countries of Europe, or the pioneer communities of the United States of America.

Educational interest was not on a high plane, as compared with modern standards. Teachers were ill prepared for their work, and poorly paid. Often they were worn out old workmen, who converted their workshops into combination school and work rooms, with school desk and work bench side by side, and rod and plane both within easy reach. Sometimes the teacher was a wandering minstrel, not a native colonial, nor of the Mennonite faith, who just happened along, and claimed to know his letters. Frequently the winter teacher also functioned as the summer herdsman, thus obtaining an all year job that enabled him to eke out a scant existence. The chief task of the school master was to hear each child recite its Scripture verse or repeat its two times two, all memory work, and to keep order. This gave him ample time to ply his real trade, that of cabinet maker, or tailor, or shoemaker perhaps.

Progress naturally was slow. Several years were required to master the elements of the alphabet and the art of writing. With this accomplished, the school days for many were ended. Those who remained longer might learn a little ciphering, ornamental writing perhaps, and memorize a few more Scripture verses. The primary aim of the whole system was to perpetuate the German language and to save the children for the faith of the fathers. The curriculum, therefore, consisted of the three conventional R's, with a fourth added—Religion; and some attention was also given to singing. The dominant

control of the schools was nominally placed into the hands of the elders; but of effective supervision there was very little. School was usually kept in the *Grosze Stube* of some well to do farmer; but later, primitive school buildings, and ultimately model school houses were erected. The distinctive school furniture consisted of a long table through the center of the room, with the boys on one side, the girls on the other, and the teacher at the head; and sometimes with rough benches along the side wall for the smaller children.

The rod was freely used as an incentive to good scholarship, and when that failed other more drastic methods were often used. The teacher had little or no special preparation for his work; the medium of instruction during the early years was the everyday *Plattdeutsch*, though later High German became customary. Under such a system, of course, it was inevitable that the second generation of these Prussian immigrants should deteriorate both in their general cultural, as well as in their spiritual ideals in their new home; a price often paid by the colonists of every land in their pioneering.

There were always a few far sighted men in every community, however, who saw the need of keeping up higher educational standards. Among these was a group in the Molotschna settlement, who in 1820, formed a school association under the leadership of Johan Cornies for the purpose of founding a sort of continuation school at Ohrloff, whose primary object was to train teachers for the village schools.

To the head of this *Verein* school, Cornies called a trained teacher from his old home in West Prussia, by the name of Tobias Voth. This secondary school was supported by tuition fees, and was under the control of a voluntary school association. For six years Voth enrolled an increasing number of students in his advanced

classes. Evening sessions and reading circles were introduced for the benefit of those who were too busy to attend during the day. Advanced Bible study and mission courses were added to the curriculum, and singing classes. But Voth was ahead of his day. Although Cornies, the president of the association, who had already shown himself somewhat of a local dictator as well as a public benefactor, seemed in a general way to be in sympathy with Voth's objectives, yet the latter's piety and deep concern for things of the spirit rather than those of the world, may have seemed a bit too idealistic for the more practical minded master farmer from Iuschanlee. Besides, Voth taught only in the German language, while Cornies believed that Russian, too, should be added. At any rate, after six years of teaching, this imported school master of the Ohrloff Verein school was dismissed. He later established a private school in the Chortitz settlement, where he continued efficient work as a teacher for many years.

In the meantime, in 1829, Voth's successor at Ohrloff was found in the person of another Prussian by the name of Heinrich Heese, a one time clerk of the Chortitz Gebietsamt, a decided Russian patriot, and well versed in the Russian language. But Heese, too, in the course of time, encountered the displeasure of the local association president. In 1842 he left Ohrloff to found a similar advanced school at Chortitz, but now called a Central school. Several years later a third Prussian teacher, Heinrich Franz, was called to Ohrloff, where he remained until 1858. Franz was chiefly known as a strict disciplinarian and a good mathematician; and author of a mathematical text book long used in the schools of south Russia; also a composer of a popular *Choralbuch*.

These three early pioneer teachers, all of whom had been imported from West Prussia, did much to raise the

educational standards throughout the two Mennonite colonies. The early Central schools, also, just mentioned, whose distinctive aim was to provide advanced training for both the village teachers and the village and district clerks became the models for a number of later Central schools throughout nearly every Mennonite settlement.

As just indicated, supervision of the village schools had at first been left largely to the church elders; but in 1843 in Molotschna the Agricultural Commission, under the presidency of Johan Cornies, had been granted considerable control over the school system by the Russian authorities at Odessa. This power Cornies utilized in a rather arbitrary manner during the five remaining years of his official career, but to the great improvement, nevertheless, of the educational standards of the Molotschna colony. Among the reforms he introduced were the erection of model school houses, compulsory attendance, the licensing of competent teachers, uniform text books, and well planned courses of study. A little later, too, teachers' conferences were organized. By 1870 these early methods of unsatisfactory supervision were replaced by regular organized school boards. In the Chortitz colony progress followed practically similar lines.

Mennonite schools by this time were of a relatively high order, much better than those of their Russian or non-Russian neighbors; and were frequently attended by native Russians as well as by many non-Mennonite German colonists. In the meantime, too, the educational program was expanded. More Central schools were established, and in 1874 a special girls school was founded in Molotschna, to be followed in later years by similar institutions in other Mennonite colonies. These girls schools, taught usually by women teachers, were founded partly because of the desire of the Russian government that girls and boys be taught separately in the advanced schools, but

more largely because the Mennonite school authorities felt that girls needed a special type of training to best fit them for the duties of the home.

By 1881 all the German colonists in south Russia had lost many of their special school privileges; school administration after this was largely taken over by the regular department of education of the Russian government. From this time until the collapse of the Czarist regime in 1917, the Mennonite Boards of Education and Teachers Associations were continually engaged in a brave but losing fight with the Russian government for control of their schools.

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

Being a religious people, the Mennonite colonists brought all their religious convictions with them from the mother country; but, as already seen, not their church organizations. They did not begin their religious life here in either of the two settlements as a united ecclesiastical body. Being, like Mennonites everywhere, congregational in their church polity, they founded independent congregational units from the start, either by villages or groups of villages, or on the basis of their Prussian Frisian, or Flemish affiliations. Frequently these ancient factions, settling in the same village, formed a common church organization; but more frequently each settled its own village. Thus in the Old colony, Chortitz, among other villages, became almost entirely a Flemish church congregation, while Kronsweide nearby became Frisian. In the Molotschna colony Ohrloff, Halbstadt and many others were Flemish, while Rudnersweide remained Frisian.

Sometimes whole villages came as congregational units, like Alexanderwohl in 1820 which was of the old

Flemish faith, and a member of the ancient Old Groningen society; and Gnadenfeld, in 1835, of the same faction. Not every village had a meeting house of its own, except where the population warranted. Thus in the Chortitz colony, in 1820, there were only two meeting houses among the eighteen villages. Where meeting houses were lacking, the school building might be used for religious services, or occasionally private homes. In course of time, however, each congregation, whether occupying one or more or even parts of villages, aimed to have its own church building. With the coming of the factions in the late sixties, new separate meeting houses were erected.

Church architecture, as well as religious practises, were transplanted from the mother country and underwent little change in the new home during the first fifty years. Meeting houses were all alike: a plain oblong wooden building, at first unpainted, with a platform along one side for the pulpit, and a long bench nearby for the *Vorsingers*, who intoned the long hymns sung without musical accompaniment. The men of the congregation sat on one side, and the women on the other; attached to one end of the building, near the pulpit, was the little *Ohmstubchen* where the numerous ministers gathered before the meeting to outline the program of the morning service, and transact such other business as the needs of the day demanded.

Each congregation was a complete self-sufficient, independent ecclesiastical unit, with an elder, who was authorized to fulfill all ecclesiastical functions, several ministers, and a deacon or two, all chosen by lot from the laity, without special training for their work and unsalaried; and for that reason usually selected from among the well to do owners of ample sized farms. Such influence as the ministry enjoyed, therefore, was due not so

much to their intellectual and moral superiority as to their economic affluence, and the reverence which Mennonites have always had for their heaven selected spiritual leaders.

Since the local civil government was also completely in the hands of the Mennonites, the ministry exerted unusual influence in the everyday affairs of the colonists, as well as in their spiritual matters, especially in the case of the village schools, which for a long time had been under their supervision. Both the Mennonite local officials as well as the Russian supervisory authorities at Odessa frequently consulted the elders in the administration of local affairs. This necessitated frequent meetings of the elders of every wing of the church, out of which grew an institution known as *Kirchen Konvent* (Church Council) in 1850, the highest church authority in the colony.

Although the various Mennonite groups agreed on the fundamentals of Mennonitism such as non-resistance, opposition to the oath, adult baptism upon confession of faith, and theoretical religious toleration, yet in matters of religious practise there were some minor differences. In some of the Flemish churches sermons were read from a book of sermons—the preacher remaining seated; among the Frisians there was less dependence on the printed sermons, and the preacher delivered his sermons standing. In some congregations the bread in the communion service was distributed by the elder to each communicant in his seat; in others all the participants gathered in groups around the communion table. Slight and insignificant as these age old differences were, however, they were often sufficiently well enough entrenched in the traditions of church practises to prevent effective cooperation in much needed religious effort.

The spiritual life of the colonists through the first

two generations was not of a high order. Frontier conditions are seldom conducive to the cultivation of high cultural or spiritual ideals. Educational opportunities were meager. The close affiliation of the church elders with the civil authorities in administering local government had its usual result. As in the state churches of both pre and post Reformation days, church membership was likely to become confused with the rights of citizenship; for according to their special charter of privileges, the Mennonites in order to enjoy their privileges and exemptions in the empire had to be members of the organization with which the original contract had been made. Church membership, therefore, was essential to the enjoyment of highly desirable civil privileges. Membership thus came to be regarded as a matter of course, and was no longer based on actual conversion. Everybody joined church, though perhaps a little later than in the state churches which practised infant baptism.

To be sure a certain amount of ecclesiastical discipline was demanded; gross sin, and in some cases slight deviations from the established rules, were punished by excommunication. Some of the more conservative groups also added another old means of discipline in connection with excommunication, a practise called "avoidance" which, by demanding that all business and social ties as well as religious fellowship be completely denied the unfortunate victim, practically cut him off from making a living in a tightly closed community; and was almost a sure remedy for bringing him to repentance. This gave the elders, who often exercised this power rather arbitrarily, unusual control over the economic and social well being of the whole community as well as over the religious faith of their members. To such a victim of stern discipline, the various church divisions were often a blessing in disguise; for the power of the elder did not

extend beyond the confines of his own wing of the church.

And so we have here a rare and interesting example of Mennonite self-government based on the principle of passive resistance. The experiment had its difficulties. It was not always easy to carry out the Mennonite doctrine of non-resistance and at the same time maintain the discipline necessary for a stable social order. To be sure all major crimes were adjudicated by the larger Russian units of government; but to the Mennonite village magistrate fell the lot of administering local discipline. That there was a strong sentiment among the Mennonites in favor of maintaining their historic non-resistant principles is shown by the fact that although all the other local village offices were held by men of their own faith, that of local constable was always turned over to a non-Mennonite Russian, who had no scruples against the use of force, usually some hired man or other day laborer who happened to live in the village. Differences of opinion on this matter resulted in the early twenties in one of the first native church divisions.

Kleine Gemeinde

Claas Reimer, a rather sensitive soul, with a somewhat narrow religious horizon, contentious and critical in spirit, after being ordained a minister in his native church in Danzig, migrated, in 1804, first to the Chortitz community, and later to Molotschna. He was out of step from the beginning with the rest of his fellow ministers in the Flemish church. He found fault with the laxity of their church discipline; he criticized the entire church as being too formal in its church practices and worship; and especially did he question the right of a Mennonite civil official to administer local police power over a fellow Mennonite church member. In course of time Reimer gained a few followers for his views, and stirred up so

much dissension through the preaching of his doctrines that the Molotschna elder, Jacob Enns, requested the local Gebietsamt to silence him. Reimer appealed to the Chortitz elder, Johan Wiebe, to intercede in his behalf. The latter, however, also threatened the disturber with banishment in case he set up a separate ecclesiastical organization apart from the Mennonite body already in existence.

Paying no heed to the threats of the two elders, Reimer, with eighteen others, seceded from the main body and organized a church of their own. Although the Mennonite elders put up a strong fight against the move, the new party secured recognition from the government as a separate ecclesiastical organization with all the rights and privileges originally granted the main body of Mennonites. Other similar groups seceded at the same time throughout the different settlements. These later united with one another to form what became known as the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

A pamphlet, published in Ohrloff in 1838 by a member of this group, justifies Reimer's withdrawal under five heads. First, it is entirely contrary to the teaching of the Saviour, and contrary to the non-resistant faith to turn a brother over to the civil authorities for punishment in case of alleged misconduct. As this practise grew among the Molotschnaites, so says this writer, spiritual discipline grew more lax, and drinking and other vices increased. The ban was sparingly enforced against such. Second, in reply to the charge that the new party exercised too strict a church discipline for minor ecclesiastical offenses, the accusers are referred to the sixteen punishable faults recorded in II Timothy 3:1-5. They punish only such wrong doing as the word of God commands. Third, as to the charge of disloyalty to the government "although we do not resist evil, yet we recognize a gov-

ernment as divinely ordained. We have never refused to be obedient to the government, but in such matters as arresting bad people, arresting them to transport them, or to accuse some one before the government, or to help to punish with money or corporal punishment, all such Jesus gave us no example for, but turned such over to the worldly government. We are not with those who would overthrow the government, for we know that it is ordained of God." Fourth, the reason for warning their people against attendance at weddings as then conducted was due to the fact that the ancient example of young Tobias was no longer followed on these occasions; but instead "there is lust of eye and of the flesh, and a high and proud spirit which is not from the Father but from the world. Although there is no direct word in the Scripture forbidding attendance at weddings, yet it is said, we are to have no fellowship with the world. You know yourselves how the poor blind people act at these wedding feasts, the one proud, the other still prouder, the pipe in one hand, and the song book in the other as if the living God, and the dying Lord Jesus could be honored thereby. Warning against such practises can be found in the George Hansen confession of faith, and also in that of Hans von Steen." Fifth, they do not approve of sermons and eulogies of the dead at funeral services, a practise which formerly was common only among Catholics and Lutherans. But recently these have been introduced among the Mennonites, the pamphlet says, and now are thoroughly entrenched among them. Even though the life of the departed one may have been evil, in order to assure the relatives of the blessedness of their loved one, the life of the deceased is highly eulogized at the grave.

On the main issue in this controversy, namely the use of force by the Mennonites against fellow Mennonites to bring about compliance with local temporal regula-

tions, Reimer undoubtedly was right in his contention that this was inconsistent with the historic faith and practise of Mennonitism. Never before had the Mennonites been entrusted with the task of maintaining civil order in a local community through the exercise of the police power. It was a new experience for them; and they could not always square their practise with their non-resistant theory when the local magistrate found it necessary to lead a fellow Mennonite to the whipping post, or lock him up in the local jail. There was plenty of need for reform, no doubt, of the spiritual and social life in most of the churches at that time. But according to Reimer himself, the movement he inaugurated often broke the bounds of moderation, and resulted in an outbreak of fanaticism and excessive emotionalism, that was even more deplorable than the conditions it sought to remedy. Reimer, himself, however, seems to have kept his head. But his small church never grew to large dimensions. By 1860 it had nearly run its course. During the seventies the small remnant migrated bodily to Manitoba and Nebraska. A small faction, too, which had migrated from the parent body to the Crimea in the early sixties, where under the leadership of elder Jacob Wiebe they had been transformed by some additional practises even more proscribed, and a new mode of baptism, joined the great trek to Kansas in 1874, where they have since become known as the *Krimmer Brethren*.

Die Grosze Gemeinde

During these same years, the early twenties, another troublesome controversy agitated some of the congregations in the Molotschna settlement. Elder Bernhard Fast of the Ohrloff congregation, a rather liberal minded and progressive leader, introduced a number of innova-

tions in his religious practises which aroused the bitter opposition of the majority of his conservative membership. Three-fourths of his congregation, some four hundred families, withdrew and organized a congregation of their own which, because it embraced the larger part of the membership, became known as the *Grosze Gemeinde*, but among themselves familiarly spoken of as the "Pure Flemish." Among the innovations to which objections were raised were the ordination of elder Fast, by a neighboring Frisian elder, rather than by one of his own wing of the church; the admission of a non-Mennonite missionary to the communion table; the founding of the *Ohrloff Vereins Schule*; and the organization of a Bible society, a branch of the St. Petersburg society whose chief function was the distribution of free Bibles. One of the charges against this Bible society was that the titles of its officers, president and secretary, had a militaristic sound; although in reality, as the chairman of the *Fuersorge Komitee* remarked, there was no more connection between these titles and militarism than between his snuff box and the moon.

In the beginning of this controversy, Fast had the sympathy and cooperation of elder Franz Goertz of the Frisian Rudnerweide congregation, and of elder Peter Wedel of the extremely conservative Old Flemish, though spiritually wide awake Alexanderwohl group. Some years later elder Fast, because of certain political activities, lost most of the support of these two congregations. The Pure Flemish seceders, later known as the Lichtenau-Petershagen group of churches, remained quite conservative in all their religious practises, while the Ohrloff church became the center of the religious and cultural life of the whole Molotschna community. Long before the close of the past century, however, all these religious differences had been ironed out.

Brueder Gemeinde

By far the most serious religious controversy was that which during the middle of the past century resulted in the formation of what is known as the *Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde*. As already suggested, because church membership was almost taken for granted among the Mennonites, religious fervor was not carried to a high pitch. The Gnadenfeld congregation, however, in the Molotschna was an exception to this generalization. Here for some years Bible study, prayer meetings, and missionary festivals had been in general vogue.

Here was located, also, an advanced *Bruderschule* which for a time, under the direction of Johan Lange, a teacher trained in Germany, exerted considerable influence upon the cultural and religious life of the community, not always, however of the most wholesome sort. In the neighboring German Evangelical colony too, labored an evangelical pietist, pastor Wuest by name, a sort of John Wesley, well known among the various Protestant German colonies of south Russia. Pastor Wuest was a fiery preacher, stressing wherever he went especially the free grace of God as a means of eternal salvation, and the need of a greater sin-consciousness, and a more vital religious experience among church members than prevailed generally among both the Mennonites and Lutherans of that day. This evangelical preacher frequently visited the Gnadenfeld mission festivals and prayer meetings. Partly through his influence, a small group of laymen from several villages about Gnadenfeld, desirous of a more emotional type of religious life, and protesting against what they regarded as the spiritual lifelessness then prevalent among many of the churches of the time, began to meet as a small prayer group in private houses. At one of these meetings at Elizabethtal in January 1860,

after vainly asking elder Lenzman to administer the communion to them as a special group, and at a time other than the regular date set for this rite, they observed the ceremony by themselves without the elder's assistance and against his advice.

This bold and revolutionary step, of course, immediately arrested the attention of the church elders. Communion, according to the traditional practises of the church, could be administered only by an elder, never even by a mere minister, to say nothing about an ordinary layman. At the same time this group of eighteen men, without a preacher among them, drew up a document in which they stated their reasons for desiring to withdraw from the main body; this they presented to the elders. Among these reasons were—

"The religious decay of the entire Mennonite brotherhood, and on account of the Lord's will and our conscience we can no longer fellowship with you as a church. For we fear that God's judgment is inevitable, since the prevailing Godlessness crieth unto Heaven. Besides we are fearful lest the Government repeal the special privileges granted to the Mennonites on account of their open transgressions. It is sad to behold on market days how the Mennonites carry on such a frivolous life, in which even ministers take part."

This charge made by these sinstricken souls that the whole church was spiritually dead, and no longer fit to function as a soul saving institution, of course, did not soften the determination of the majority of the elders to stop the secession movement, which, if allowed to proceed unhindered, might endanger the unity of the whole denomination, and might even threaten their special privileges enjoyed under the government. But opposition had the usual result. It in turn strengthened the convictions of the small band, and their numbers increased. In the

meantime a similar movement for a more vital spiritual life based on a more real religious experience had also arisen in the Chortitz colony, though perhaps from not quite the same source. In almost every congregation throughout both colonies there were a few sensitive souls who joined the new following. Gradually throughout the year 1860, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the elders, the movement crystallized into a new and separate church organization.

If the old church was spiritually dead, then of course, the baptism by which members had been admitted into its fellowship was not valid. Soon the new body demanded that recruits from the old church be admitted into the new only by rebaptism. A little later in the year some one questioned whether the traditional Mennonite method of baptism by sprinkling was Scriptural. The decision was in the negative, and immersion was adopted as the prevailing method. At the same time ministers and elders were elected; and before the year had passed, a new church had been completely organized and had begun a vigorous campaign for recruits.

In the main, the new body did not deviate far from the fundamentals of Mennonite doctrine. They stressed especially, however, the emotional side of their new religious life; and insisted that conversion was a very definite experience, marking a decided turning point in ones whole spiritual existence; and was not the result of a gradual and evolutionary growth through the medium of catechetical instruction as practised by the main body of Mennonites. Religious depth was inclined to be measured by the intensity of definite emotional experiences.

In the early years, in common with other similar movements advocating a freer and more spontaneous expression of their newly found liberty under the free grace of God, and under the stress of deep emotion, which was

often whipped up to a high pitch, the new body made much of enjoying their spiritual freedom. They became quite demonstrative in their religious practises, giving free vent to their emotionalism in their prayer meetings, held in private houses for a time, in much singing, clapping of hands, and, like the Holy Rollers of Benton Harbor, in shouting, dancing and bodily contortions. Some of them, simple minded literalists that they were, found Biblical justification for their emotional extravagances in the example of David and his harp, and the Scriptural admonition to make a joyful noise unto the Lord with the trumpet and timbrel; violins, organs and other musical instruments were introduced into their worship; Communion was administered at frequent intervals; foot-washing followed the breaking of bread; and since men and women were spiritually equal, the sexes sometimes observed the rite indiscriminately. The "holy kiss" also was practised in a few cases without distinction between brethren and sisters. Several cases of immorality found their way into the records. Like the early Quakers in New England, occasionally a few of the more fanatical attended the meetings of the old church, and insisted on breaking into the regular worship with some sort of demonstration or uncomplimentary remarks of their own.

These fanatical outbursts of course, were not usual, and were confined to the earlier years of the movement. Time and sensible leadership rid it finally of these excesses; the whole movement in spite of its occasional intemperate fanaticism was not without its beneficial influence upon the old church. Under the spiritual leadership in the main body of such elders as Lenzman of Gnadenfeld, Harder of Ohrloff, Suderman of Berdiansk, and others, more progressive activities and a deeper spiritual tone was increasingly fostered throughout the church at large in the years that followed.

At best, however, the followers of the new found freedom remained convinced that theirs was a superior brand of religion; and it was their duty to share this new discovery with their erstwhile misguided fellow Mennonites. Long after the first stages of fanaticism, above referred to, had been spent, it was still customary for groups of the new following to invite themselves to the homes of the members of the old church, and if not asked inside, to remain outside, to sing appropriate penitential hymns and offer prayer in behalf of their erring brethren, in the hope that this procedure might bring them to see the true light; for to these zealots, the old church was still hopelessly corrupt.

But the new group insisted that they were still followers of Menno Simons. The old church, not they, had departed from the true faith, they said. They were the real Mennonites. This insistence that they be still regarded as Mennonites, was due to the fact that the peculiar privileges enjoyed by the Mennonites were granted by the Russian government to Mennonites as a special body. Under any other name the new group would likely forfeit these privileges; consequently they clung to the name and many of the fundamental doctrines of the original Mennonite body. They finally assumed the official name of *Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde*; and fastened upon the old church from which they had withdrawn the title *Kirchliche Mennoniten*, perhaps, because, like the state church, the latter assumed somewhat of a "churchly" attitude in their religious practises.¹³

13 The term *Kirchliche* has never been used in any description of this branch of the church in the English language, and it is almost impossible to turn the word into English intelligently in this connection. Since the term has been arbitrarily foisted on the main body by the Mennonite Brethren, and never accepted by the former, I shall refer to the main group here arbitrarily as the "Old Mennonites," although this term, too, has no sanction in practise by any group.

This assumption of religious superiority did not make for congenial relations between the old church and the new. During the first decade of the controversy, in the sixties, the two factions carried on one of the most unlovely religious feuds in all Mennonite history. The majority of the elders in the old church regarding many of the revolutionary practises of the new group as a menace to the traditional beliefs of the Mennonite faith, and fearful lest dissension within their ranks might furnish the Russian government an excuse for cancelling their special privileges, went to unjustifiable lengths, nevertheless, in trying to prevent the dissenters from gaining official government consent for organizing a new church in which they might practise the kind of religious life which their consciences demanded. The fact that the "Brethren" had already withdrawn from the old church did not prevent the elders of the latter from expelling them; and applying in some cases the doctrine of avoidance, which because of its denial of all economic intercourse between the excommunicated and his former brethren, resulted in complete economic ruin of the one expelled.

After exhausting all the ecclesiastical means of discipline without success, the elders turned to the civil authorities, the Gebietsamt, whose Mennonite officials for the most part were equally opposed to the formation of a new religious organization. The Agricultural Commission, too, joined the other governmental agencies in the protest. Even the non-Mennonite Fuersorge Komitee at Odessa shared the views of the other authorities. But all to no avail. Religious conviction thrives on opposition. Although the leaders were threatened with Siberia by these various agencies if they persisted in carrying out their intentions, and some were actually imprisoned for a time, while others had suffered economic ruin, yet the

movement made continued though slow progress.

In the meantime, the Molotschna Brethren had sent one of their number, Johan Claasen, to the imperial court at St. Petersburg to intercede in their behalf with the central government. After a stay of several years, Claasen finally secured official recognition for the organization of a new church without the sacrifice of their special privileges as Mennonites. At the same time, too, in 1862, he had received a land concession under favorable conditions for a new settlement along the Kuban river, in the upper Caucasus. Soon after, two Brethren settlements were started here, from both the mother colonies, where for some years they endured serious economic hardships, but were free to practise their religion unmolested. In 1872 the Kuban church had a membership of one hundred and fifty, which by 1914 had increased to a total population of fifteen hundred. Some years later Claasen was granted a gold medal by the Russian government, not for his services in founding a new religious body, but for his services as a colonizer of a new frontier settlement. Not all of the Mennonite Brethren of course moved to the Kuban at this time; many remained in the old colonies.

This unlovely controversy just described was not exclusively a religious one. It had somewhat of an economic basis as well. This was just the time, it will be remembered, of the struggle between the landless and the land owners. Most of the settlers in the Kuban colony were from the former class; Claasen also was of this group. Mennonite Brethren were the most numerous contingent in all the newer colonies founded after this; and among the poorer in the old colonies. Economics and religion even here could not be entirely divorced.

Although the Brethren in course of time outlived their earlier fanatical practises, they never lost their emo-

tionalism nor their missionary zeal; and it may be added, their sense of superior piety. Being strict immersionists, they associated freely with the Baptists; and at one time in their early history they seriously considered joining that body. It was only the Mennonite peace doctrine, and the practise of footwashing; and the fear, perhaps, that they would lose their Mennonite privileges by joining the Baptists that prevented the assimilation. Their extreme emotionalism, too, made them easy marks for the more or less fanatical religious movements common among an unstable religious people. They later lost some members to the Adventists and other religious faddists. In number, the Mennonite Brethren have had a steady growth. The original eighteen, in 1860, grew by 1872, at the time of the organization of their general conference to six hundred. A number of them from various villages joined the trek to America in the late seventies. By 1914 they composed about one-fourth of the whole Russian Mennonite population. Since the world war, due to their common hardships, the two wings of the church have largely dropped their old antagonisms, and have worked in harmony in all matters that affected their common interests.

Jerusalem Friends

Side by side with this Mennonite Brethren controversy there raged another small religious tempest, but this time confined in the main to the enterprising Gnadenfeld congregation. This movement justifies a few more words here because it is entirely likely that since it occurred at the same time and in the same community as the agitation above mentioned, and involving to a certain extent the same personalities, it may have had some bearing on that trouble. *Jerusalem Friends*, or *Templers*, as they came later to be called, were a group

of religious enthusiasts originally found in Wurttemberg, Germany, followers of a theologian by the name of Christopher Hoffman, who sponsored a kind of Zionist movement, the chief objective of which was to build a new temple at Jerusalem. Theologically, the new cult was a strange compound of spiritual pietism, missionary zeal and rationalistic thinking. In 1861, Johan Lange, a former student at one of the training schools of the sect in Wurttemberg, was installed as head of the Bruderschule at Gnadenfeld, by the trustees of that institution.

Being an ardent follower of the Jerusalem Friends ideas, Lange soon found fault with the traditional beliefs of the Gnadenfeld Mennonites; and in special meetings for both children and adults held in the school building taught the new doctrines. In the course of a few years he secured a small following among some of the school supporters in both Gnadenfeld and surrounding villages; but at the same time aroused the bitter opposition of a majority of the Gnadenfeld membership, and especially the officials of the church. Most of Lange's followers, including Johan himself, were of the landless class. After a bitter controversy lasting several years, during which Lange spent some time in jail, the head of the Bruderschule was forced to resign. Together with a goodly number of his followers, he too, founded in the Caucasus, in 1866, a settlement and church congregation, named *Templehof*, not far from the Mennonite Brethren community already described.

Peters Brethren

To complete the catalogue of Gnadenfeld's contribution to the religious eccentricities of the Russian Mennonites during the period of the pious sixties, mention should be made of another small sect, the *Peters Brethren*, followers of one Herman Peters, an unlettered farmer,

who found the true church based on a literal interpretation of numerous apostolic injunctions, meant to meet the needs of the apostolic times. Because Christ brake the bread at the first communion service, Peters insisted the bread must be broken, and not passed to the communicant in small pieces already cut, as was the usual Mennonite custom; for which reason his followers were sometimes called *Breadbreakers*.^{13a} Minute regulations were laid down for every detail of everyday living. Men were forbidden to wear neckties, watch chains, starched shirts, and polished boots. Women were not to wear ear rings, gay clothes, laces, or jewelry of any kind. Forbidden, also, were the reading of newspapers, discussion of political questions, the use of tobacco or strong drink. Children were not to attend the public schools, nor to greet strangers with the usual "good day", but were to pass silently by. When entering a home, brethren were to say "Peace be unto you"; but when entering the house of a stranger they must say "May it be well with you," in the Russian language. This obscure sect had little influence upon the religious life of the Mennonite body as a whole. They have since disappeared from the older settlements, but a small group is still found in west Siberia.

Mennonite Alliance Church

After the sixties there were no serious divisions in the Mennonite body until 1905, when a small group in the Molotschna separated from the Old Mennonite body

^{13a} As a boy of ten I knew a *Brotbrecher*, a young man drafted for service in the Vladimiroff Forestry where my father was the *Oekonom*, but who refused to serve. He never touched a tool, but never offered any resistance either if ordered to go with the others to the place of labor. He ate at a common table with the others but would not cut bread with a knife, though he did not mind breaking off slices which had been cut by some one else.—J. H. Janzen.

because of objection to certain practises of the main body—open communion with other bodies, form of baptism, and a rather liberal attitude toward church discipline. In an attempt to appeal to both the Old Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren they practised immersion, but did not insist on rebaptism of members from either of the other Mennonite churches. At the time of the outbreak of the war this small group, consisting of several congregations, formed the third and least of the groups into which the Mennonite body was divided.

INDEPENDENT RUSSIAN MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS

This story of the Russian Mennonites told thus far concerns for the most part only the Mennonite colonists of the steppes of south Russia, and their daughter settlements; it does not include the scattered Mennonite congregations some five or six hundred miles to the northwest, largely in the former Polish provinces of Russia, most of which were as old as the settlements thus far discussed. These Mennonites were not called colonists; they did not locate on the frontiers to serve as model farmers in response to liberal inducements offered by Catherine and her successors; nor did they enjoy all the liberal land grants and political privileges granted to their south Russian brethren. To be sure, they were granted military exemption, control over their local schools, religious toleration; and, living in compact villages, a bit of local political autonomy. Most of them were poor, living on small farms of fifty acres or less, rented from some local nobleman, or sometimes owned by themselves, engaged in general farming and dairying or employed as day laborers. There were no rich land owners among them.

In Volhynia there was a Swiss Mennonite settlement,

scattered through a number of small villages, with a total Mennonite population, in 1870, of some five hundred. As suggested earlier, these were originally of Amish descent, and still retained during this period some of their earlier conservative Amish beliefs and practises. Hooks and eyes were just passing. These inherited peculiarities together with their Swiss or south German dialect, in contrast to the Low Dutch of the other Russian Mennonites, kept them a separate ecclesiastical organization even among neighboring brethren of Prussian descent. They had no religious affiliation with their south Russian brethren. In 1874 the Swiss Mennonites sold out their villages and migrated as a group to America.

Near by, in Volhynia and in the neighboring province of Kiev, there were several congregations of Prussian origin, even poorer in this world's goods than the Swiss. These, too, under their elder, Tobias Unruh, joined the big trek to the new world in the seventies.

The two small Mennonite groups at Deutsch Kazun, and Deutsch Wymisle, near Warsaw, along the Vistula, were mere extensions of the West Prussian churches, who found themselves under Russian jurisdiction after the partitioning of Poland; but back in Polish territory again after 1918. Cut off from their former West Prussian brethren by the national boundary line, and far removed from their south Russian co-religionists they, too, found themselves a separate ecclesiastical body. The emigration to America from this group was slight; and there are only two congregations of importance left today in this part of the former Russian empire.

LOSS OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGES

The special privileges enjoyed by the Mennonites and the other German colonists of south Russia set them

apart, as we have already observed as a distinct group within the empire, really a state within a state, separated from the native Russians by social and political as well as religious barriers; but at the same time held together firmly as a group by ties of language, religion, racial pride and a sense of superior culture. It can readily be seen that this was an anomolous situation, that could not last forever. It was only under the dominion of an autocratic Czar that discriminations such as these in favor of a foreign population was at all possible. Under the growing democracy of the time it was becoming increasingly difficult to grant favors to a minority above those enjoyed by the citizenry in general.

The growing nationalism of middle Europe during the sixties, evidenced specifically in the revolt of the Polish Russians in 1863, the emergence of Prussian militarism, the ambitious designs against the Turkish empire—all these conspired to convince the Russian "Slavophiles" that the day for Russianizing all Russia had come.

The blow fell in 1870. An imperial ukase proclaimed that the day of special privileges had ended for the German colonists. The Fuersorge Komitee at Odessa was to be abolished, and the colonists were to be governed directly from St. Petersburg; Russian was to be the official language in the local Gebietsamt, and was to be introduced as a subject of study in all the schools; all the German schools were to be supervised directly by the imperial educational authorities; and worst of all, for the Mennonites, military exemption was to be abolished. The colonists were to be given ten years in which to accommodate themselves to the new order. After that they would become full fledged Russian citizens with no special favors.

To the Mennonites, who had every reason to believe up to this time that the promises made by empress Cath-

erine had been granted in perpetuity, this threat to end their exemptions from war service came as a distinct shock. They immediately took such steps as they could to protect their former privileges. At a meeting held at Alexanderwohl, in midwinter of 1871, of delegates from the Molotschna, Chortitz and Bergthal colonies, they elected a delegation to visit the imperial city, and present the Czar with a petition in which they stated their historic peace principles, and plead that the promises with which they were induced to settle the steppes of South Russia might not be abrogated. This delegation under the leadership of elder Suderman of Berdiansk, and elder Dueck of the Chortitz colony, neither of whom unfortunately could speak Russian, arriving in St. Petersburg later in the winter, did not succeed in having a personal audience with the Czar as they had hoped; but through the good offices of the president of the Odessa Fuersorge Komitee, who happened to be in the city at the time, they were able to meet several ministers of the imperial council, and the chairman of the special commission that had been appointed to draft the new military laws.

Although neither the ministers, nor count Heyden of the special commission could give the Mennonites any definite or detailed information as to the exact nature of the forthcoming laws, all of them assured the elders, nevertheless, that they would not likely be granted complete exemption, but might be assigned to some sort of non-combatant service in the hospital or sanitary departments. If Mennonites were completely exempted, said count Heyden, then all the Russians would want to be Mennonites. Assured by elder Suderman that even non-combatant service under the war department would not be acceptable to the Mennonites, the count replied that if everybody were like Mennonites in this respect stable government would be impossible, since it would soon be

overrun by its enemies. Deputy Epp of Chortitz answered that if all were like the Mennonites there would be no need for defense against enemies since there would be no enemies, to which the count had to agree.

In the course of the interview one of the deputies suggested that perhaps a money payment might be substituted for non-combatant service, to which the minister replied that such an arrangement would not be possible. Buying military exemption with money was a common Mennonite practise running back through their Prussian and Dutch history. It would hardly seem consistent, however, to refuse hospital service on the one hand and yet be willing to secure freedom from all military obligations by the payment of money which could be directly used for the promotion of war activities. But Mennonites were not always logical or consistent in their attempt to reconcile their heavenly with their earthly citizenship. This first attempt of the Mennonite delegation to get a favorable hearing before the St. Petersburg authorities was not very satisfactory. The fact that neither of the two chief spokesmen, Suderman and Dueck, could speak the language of the country did not make a good impression with the ministry; and the details of the new law had not yet been worked out. The delegates returned home without any assurance as to their future; but with a growing conviction that their privileged days were numbered.

Still hoping that a personal appeal to the Czar himself, the *Landesvater*, might ward off the threatened loss of their privileged status, the churches sent a second delegation the next year to attempt a meeting with him, but again without success. They did have an audience with the Crown Prince Constantin, however, who reminded them, in German, of the visit he had made to the Mennonite colonies some years before. But he, too, assured

the delegation that while every effort would be made in the forthcoming law to meet the religious scruples of the Mennonites, yet they would be compelled to perform some sort of non-combatant service in the new arrangement. This second delegation, too, returned home greatly disappointed, more convinced than ever that emigration now was inevitable for all such Mennonites as insisted upon the unconditional preservation of their former liberties. Several later delegations were sent to St. Petersburg during 1873, but to no avail. By 1874 the new law had been formulated, providing non-combatant service for the Mennonites—forestry service, or industrial work not connected with the war department in times of peace; and hospital service in times of war.

In the meantime, as the hope of securing favorable consideration from the government faded, the sentiment for emigration to a foreign land increased. Various countries where there was still a demand for new settlers were considered—Russian Turkestan, and even the distant Amur region, both of which had recently been added to Russia, but in neither of which the military laws would be applied; New Zealand; and North and South America. Very little was known of any of these countries. In the words of Leonard Suderman, one of the staunchest supporters of the emigration movement to America, "To many, America meant a country interesting for the adventurer, an asylum for convicts. How could one live in peace under his vine and fig tree amid such people." "Such a life," he continues, "might be possible for those who had their pockets full of revolvers, but for a non-resistant people it would be impossible to found homes amid such surroundings."

The same ignorance of the new world evidently prevailed among the other German colonists, who were also contemplating a large emigration movement, if the fol-

lowing rhyme, seemingly composed by one of the neighboring Wurttemberg Lutheran rhymesters expresses the popular sentiment among them,

*Doch Ober wo ist Amerika?
 Ich han schon ofter hara saa
 Es ist dort dribbe ungefar
 Bei vierzig Meil vom grosse Meer.
 Die Leena Meent, Sie wees davon
 "Es is net weit von Oregon"
 Die Marie saat, "Ich denk beinah
 Es is in Pennsylvania"
 Jetzt kommt derzu die alte Lis'
 Sie lacht und Meent "Es is net so,
 Es is in alt New Mexico."
 Der Michael hat das net gelitt
 Das sich die Weiber hen gestritt,
 "Ich wees es fescht, Ich kann eich saa
 S'isch dribbe in Amerika."¹⁴*

Among the men most active in the emigration movement were two Mennonites from the Berdiansk congregation, elder Leonhard Suderman, and Cornelius Jansen, the latter a prosperous grain merchant of that growing sea port. Jansen especially, who had come to Russia from Prussia as a young man, and had never given up his Prussian citizenship, and who because he had served as Prussian consul at Berdiansk for some years, was for that reason in closer touch with world affairs than his country brethren, saw from the start that emigration would be the inevitable fate of such Mennonites as would not accept some sort of war service. As early as 1871 he wrote to John F. Funk, editor of the *Herald of Truth*, published at Elkhart, Indiana, as well as to other Americans of whom he had heard, asking for detailed information about the military laws, natural resources, land laws, especially

¹⁴ Quoted by George Leibrandt in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, October, 1932.

of the western states, and such other matters as might be of interest to prospective settlers with a tender conscience on the question of war. This correspondence he later printed and distributed among the Russian Mennonites.

At the same time, too, former consul Jansen inquired of the British consul at Berdiansk as to the possibility of military exemption in Canada, and also as to the availability of large tracts of land suitable for large compact settlements. This inquiry led to a series of interesting letters written back and forth among various British and Canadian government officials—the British foreign office, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, the Governor General at Ottawa, the Canadian Department of Agriculture, and numerous lesser officials. The prospect of securing some fifty thousand industrious farmers for the unsettled prairies of western Canada aroused keen interest among the Canadian authorities, who soon began an active campaign to direct the proposed emigration to their country. The Ottawa government dispatched a special commissioner, William Hespeler, to south Russia for the purpose of interesting the Mennonites in Canada. Some of this correspondence is interesting, and is worthy of brief mention here.

The British consul at Berdiansk, writing to Earl Granville of the foreign office in London in 1872, speaking highly of the Russian Mennonites, says,

“Seven years residence in this country has enabled me to acquire a good knowledge of them, and I am personally acquainted with many of the elders. I feel no hesitation, therefore, in saying that these Germans would prove a valuable acquisition to any country they may select for their home. If they find difficulty in proceeding to Canada, they will seek refuge in the United States to which country their attention has already been directed, but as I have already stated their first choice falls on British soil, and though their determination to quit this country is fixed, yet from what

I can learn they will do so with regret if they have to leave for any other country than Canada.”¹⁵

A little later the British ambassador to Russia, writing from St. Petersburg to the Foreign office in London in answer to an inquiry whether the Imperial government would object to the emigration of the Mennonites, says that Prince Gortschagov, the leading minister in the government of Alexander II, and his greatest diplomat, suggested that the Imperial government would lay no obstacle in the way of their departure if they first fulfilled all their obligations according to law. The letter further continues,

On referring to the new military system imposed on all Russian subjects without exception which is the principal cause of these colonists emigrating from Russia, Prince Gortschagov observed that he had voted in the Council of the Empire against the withdrawal of the privileges and the exemption from military service formerly granted these colonists, on the principle that the promises made by the Sovereign of that day should be held sacred. In this opinion the Emperor had participated, but the great majority of the Council had voted in a contrary sense.

September 17, 1872, John Lowe, of the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa suggests to William Hespeler, now touring the Mennonite settlements of South Russia, that he make arrangements with some influential Mennonite to act as agent of the Dominion, to be reimbursed at the rate of two dollars per capita for all the Mennonites settling in Canada. To which Hespeler soon answers, insisting that the two dollar subsidy would be a serious mistake for,

15 For this correspondence see the excellent discussion of this whole question by Dr. Ernst Correll, in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, in July, 1937. These quotations are taken from Dr. Correll's articles.

it would not create a very favorable effect, neither would the agency be accepted by any of the Mennonites, as according to my experience of them, I find them more conscientious than their confessionalists in Canada or the United States—it would in their eyes look too much like dealing in human beings. They are not a people like the general run of emigrants—they are a reasoning, thinking, cautious, and to a large extent an educated people.

So anxious were the Canadian authorities to secure these prospective Mennonite settlers that they authorized Hespeler to grant them all their demands—exemption from military service, free land—160 acres to each head of a family, reserved in large compact areas in Manitoba, freedom of religion, their own German language, control of their own schools—practically all the privileges which had been granted them by Catherine in 1787. Hespeler, however, because he was suspected by the Russian police of fomenting a mass emigration movement, was forced to leave Russia. Cornelius Jansen also was exiled in 1874 for the same reason.

At the time Jansen started his investigation of Canadian possibilities through the British consul at Berdiansk in 1871, he also made similar inquiries concerning the United States from the American consul at the same port. The American government, however, at this time did not seem interested in the proposed migration, although in 1874 after the movement had actually begun, the United States Senate debated for over a week a bill to grant Mennonites a large compact tract of western lands, but without result. Railroad companies, together with State land departments, took a lively interest, however, in the possibility of getting industrious farmers for their unsettled lands. The Sante Fe company in 1875, sent a special agent, C. B. Schmidt, to south Russia to bring as many Mennonites as possible to their railroad

lands in Kansas. Kansas received the bulk of this immigration to the United States.

Meanwhile, by this time great interest had been aroused among the Russian Mennonites in the emigration cause through the efforts of Hespeler, and the conviction among the leaders that nothing favorable could be expected from St. Petersburg. Following Hespeler's suggestion, various congregations from the different sections of the Mennonite population selected a delegation to visit America on a tour of investigation. This delegation consisted of twelve men—Elder Jacob Buller of the Alexanderwohl congregation, and Leonhard Suderman of Berdiansk, representing the Molotschna colony; Elder Tobias Unruh from the Volhynia settlements; a layman, Andreas Schrag, speaking for the Swiss congregations of the same province; minister Heinrich Wiebe, and Oberschultz Jacob Peters, together with Cornelius Buhr, the latter on his own expense, representing the Bergthal colony; elder Wilhelm Ewert, sent by the West Prussian congregation of Heubuden; elder Cornelius Toews and David Claasen, sent by the Kleine Gemeinde; and the two Tschetter brothers, Paul and Laurence, from the Hutterite settlements.

This delegation, in the summer of 1873, visited what was then the frontier line in America of cheap lands, from Winnipeg through Minnesota, Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas, carefully investigating soil and climate, and available satisfactory lands; and inquiring about political conditions and military regulations. As already suggested, the Dominion of Canada granted most liberal inducements to prospective settlers.

Neither the national government in the United States nor any of the states could offer terms similar to those of Canada, although later three of the western states passed legislation exempting Mennonites from militia duty. The

Hutterite contingent of the delegation in a visit with President Grant in which they asked for a guarantee of military exemption from the national government, were informed by the president that he could make no such promise; but he expressed the opinion that it was not likely that any one in the United States would ever be called upon to serve in the army contrary to his religious convictions. The president, however, was favorably disposed toward the emigration movement, and recommended favorable land legislation in his message to Congress.

The delegation of Twelve returned to Russia late in the summer—the more conservative Chortitz, Bergthal, and Kleine Gemeinde delegates to recommend Canada to their brethren; and the more liberal Molotschna representatives as well as the Hutterites to recommend the United States, in spite of the fact that the guarantees of military exemption from the government of the latter were less definite than those of the Canadian government.

Large numbers of eager Mennonites throughout all the settlements were impatiently awaiting the return of the delegates, ready if the reports were favorable, to start immediately on the big trek to the promised land. In fact, several small groups had already left for America. But the mass migration did not begin until after the prospective immigrants had heard from their deputies. The enthusiastic reports brought back from the new world that there was plenty of good land for everybody to be had almost for the asking, and with a promise of absolute military exemption in Canada, and a fair degree of certainty that war service would never be demanded in the United States, aroused great eagerness for emigration throughout all the colonies in the years 1873 and '74. In those centers where the emigration fever ran highest, steps were immediately taken by many to dispose of their property with a view to an early departure the following

spring. But it was soon found that this was not always an easy matter, especially in such compact settlements like Alexanderwohl, Bergthal, and others where whole congregations and colonies had decided to emigrate en-masse.

Everybody wanted to sell, and there was nobody to buy. To make matters worse, in many of the settlements, Mennonites were living on Crown lands in which they had only a limited ownership of the soil. It was only the use of it that they had a right to sell; and even that could be transferred only to fellow Mennonites according to the original contract made with the government. Buildings and improvements, of course, belonged to the individual farmer; but without land, buildings were not of great value. The marketability of land, therefore, in the Mennonite colonies was greatly restricted; and during the first few years of the emigration movement, well improved farms sold for less than half their value. Some years later the government permitted the outright sale of land, but by this time the non-Mennonite buyers, frequently took advantage of the oversupply of farms for sale, and continued to purchase them at only a fraction of their real worth. In spite of these discouragements, nevertheless, whole villages and congregations continued their preparations for the long journey throughout the spring and summer of 1874.

The next task was to secure the necessary passports permitting departure from the country. This, too, was frequently a long drawn out process, demanding heavy fees, and accelerated only by liberal gratuities to corrupt government officials. Sometimes it was months after requests had been sent in for passports before they were available; and every step was attended with heavy expense.

By this time the government officials in St. Peters-

burg, realizing that there was strong likelihood of losing some forty thousand of the Czar's most industrious farmers in south Russia, began to consider means of stemming the emigration tide. To this end the Czar sent Adjutant General von Todtleben, himself a German Lutheran, a Crimean war hero well known among the German colonists, through the Mennonite communities offering those who would remain, certain exemptions from the most objectionable features of the new military law. He met the Mennonite civil and religious leaders in the month of May, 1874, at Halbstadt, Chortitz and Alexanderwohl, where he informed them that he was authorized by the Czar to offer them some sort of civil service as a substitute for the compulsory military duty required in the proposed conscription act. At the same time Todtleben tried to discourage the emigration movement by painting America in its darkest colors. In America, he said, the pioneer settlers would be compelled to spend much of their time and labor in draining swamps and cutting down the forests before the land would be fit for cultivation. Since labor was scarce in the new country, the settlers would be under the necessity of doing all this work themselves, whereas in Russia such work was performed by cheap native labor. As for military exemption in America, the Mennonites were not exempted in the Southern states during the Civil war; and as for the North, where they proposed to settle, it seemed altogether likely at that time, that war was inevitable with England, in which case, no doubt, they would be called upon for service with all others, so said the General.

This visit of Todtlebens, with his promise to substitute civil service disconnected from the army organization, no doubt influenced many of the more liberal minded Mennonites to reconsider their earlier determination to leave Russian soil. Both in Chortitz, and in Halbstadt

the majority of the leaders present at these meetings with the General, wrote him a letter of thanks after his departure, with expressions of gratitude for his kindly visit; and of entire satisfaction with the substitute service offered; at the same time uttering the hope nevertheless, that they might be left in entire control of their school system, which it was rumored was to be placed under government control under the new Russianization program. These promises were later enacted into law providing that the Mennonites were to be exempt from military service, in lieu of which they were to be assigned to duty in hospitals, factories, or especially in forestry service, where they were to be permitted to work in compact and exclusive groups. These concessions were to apply in times of war as well as in times of peace; but were offered only to the original Mennonite settlers in Russia and their descendants. Immigrants coming into Russia, or outside accessions coming into the church after the passing of the law, were not to be included.

While the majority seemed satisfied with these rather liberal concessions, there was a strong minority, nevertheless who believed that any service under the guise of military law would be a violation of their peace principles. These still preferred emigration to any compromise with their consciences. In the words of elder Isaac Peters, one of the staunchest defenders of this position, and exiled in midwinter because of his activities demanding absolute exemption, the government by keeping the substitute service under the control of the military department, and by limiting forestry service to a period of twenty years was keeping the back door open for entrance into later full military service.

Many of those, therefore, sharing these views, including entire villages, continued their preparations for

departure. These included in the main the more conservative groups, such as the daughter colonies of the Chortitz settlement—Bergthal and Fuerstenland; the Alexanderwohl congregation; the Swiss of Volhynia; the Hutterites; and the Kleine Gemeinde colony at Borsenko. These emigrated bodily; but from every settlement and almost from every village there were some additions to the mass movement.

The military question, of course, was not the only issue involved in this exodus. This is proven by the fact that not only Mennonites, but German Lutherans, and Catholics as well, though to a much smaller degree, none of whom shared the Mennonite peace principles, had also decided to leave their adopted country for America during this time. The program of Russianization which the government had adopted would ultimately deprive all these privileged colonies of the highly favored status which they had enjoyed heretofore, such as exclusive control of their schools, the use of their German language, and a large degree of local political autonomy under a German commission at Odessa. This commission was now to be abolished; the schools to be placed under the direct control of the Russian government; and the Russian language to be taught side by side with the favored German. To the Mennonites, especially, there seemed to be a close relation between their distinctive Mennonitism and their *Deutschtum*. It was a matter of grave doubt to many of them whether they could maintain their traditional religious principles separated from their German tongue and culture. Then, too, in every colony, there were those who decided to cast their lot with the religious absolutists for economic reasons. In every westward movement in history there has been a large contingent of the landless. And they were not absent here. Many motives lay back of the emigration movement.

The Great Trek

Among the first of the small groups to leave in the spring of 1874 was an advance guard of ten families from the Swiss congregations in Volhynia under the leadership of Andreas Schrag, one of the delegates of the year before. Several West Prussians with elder Wilhelm Ewert left Prussia about the same time. Some thirty families from Crimea, the entire congregation under their elder Jacob Wiebe, breaking up their homes on May 30th, and crossing over to England by way of Odessa, Lemberg and Hamburg, took passage at Liverpool for New York; and from there later in the summer were among the first to find their way to the plains of Kansas. A little later, the large Alexanderwohl congregation, some eight hundred souls, started their trek as a body across the Atlantic.

This Alexanderwohl congregation had been the center of the whole emigration movement from the start. Here the first meetings to discuss the whole situation had been held in 1872 and 73; and their elder Jacob Buller was one of the delegation of twelve; and here the Mennonites met General von Todtleben. The Alexanderwohl congregation had decided upon emigration even before the return of their delegate from America. Difficulty in securing their passports, however, delayed their departure until the twentieth of July, 1874. On the day they left there were no sad farewell scenes, because there was nobody to say goodbye to. Only seven families, it is said, remained of the whole congregation. Besides the Alexanderwohlers a number of individuals from various other villages attached themselves to this group so that the total number in the party that left Hamburg for Kansas was over one thousand.

About the same time, too, the remainder of the Swiss group in Volhynia, about one hundred and fifty families,

left for the new world. Many of these were poor, and needed help from the relief agencies in America. Poorer and more miserable still than the Swiss, were the Polish congregations from the region about Ostrog, who, under their leader Tobias Unruh, and with few possessions beyond their travelling expenses, left enmasse in mid-winter for the raw prairies of Kansas, where they remained a serious charge upon the Mennonite relief societies for several years. Added to these, were the Hutterites, who left for the Dakotas; and several hundred families from the Bergthal, Fuerstenland and Kleine Gemeinde groups, all of whom located on the lands selected for them the year before by their delegates in Manitoba.

The bulk of the emigrants during this first year, it will be observed, left in large groups, consisting sometimes of entire villages and settlements; but individuals from every village attached themselves to these large parties. The emigration fever had not struck all communities with equal fervor; enthusiasm for the adventure varied with the conservatism of the people, and economic conditions; and especially with the zeal of the different elders. It is estimated that by the end of the year about five thousand three hundred souls had located within the United States, mostly in Kansas, and about eleven hundred in Manitoba. The mass migration continued through the following year though with less volume. The largest number this second year located in Manitoba. By 1880, the year that ended the period of grace, the movement had about spent itself. By this time about ten thousand Russian Mennonites had left their homes in the steppes of south Russia for the United States, and about eight thousand for Manitoba.

The Auszugsgemeinde

Not all of those who had scruples against accepting the

proposed forestry service joined the trek to America. There were some who, hoping that the Russian government might still relent, delayed their going to the last minute; others, dreading the long voyage over seas to a land unfamiliar and full of uncertainties, preferred a refuge nearer home, and preferably under the emblem of their own imperial Russian eagle. This seemed possible in several small semi-independent principalities in Asiatic Turkestan, recently conquered by Russia, and now under Russian jurisdiction, though not yet subject to the Russian militarization laws. Among these sensitive Mennonites were two small groups,—one in the Samara settlement, largely from the village of Hahnsau, and another consisting of the followers of one A. Peters, in the Molotschna district.

This strange desire to face eastward rather than to follow their brethren to the west was strengthened by certain chiliastic ideas which infected both groups as a result of the rather wide spread distribution of the prophetic writings of Jung-Stilling, a German pietistic author well known among European Mennonites of that day, and other writings of a similar nature. Among the leaders of the movement, who were influenced by this literature, were elder Hamm in the Hahnsau church, and M. Klassen, a teacher in the local school of the same congregation; and elder Peters of an independent congregation in Molotschna. At the same time, too, one Claas Epp, Jr., son of the leader with the same name, of the Prussian emigration to Samara in 1853, added impetus to the eastward adventure through a book of his own written in 1877, in which he explained to his own satisfaction the prophecies of Daniel and the mysteries of Revelation. This book went through three editions and was widely distributed among the Samara Mennonites at Epp's own expense.

According to Epp's interpretation, Christ would appear on Earth in the year 1889; and somewhere in middle Asia was to be the gathering place for the faithful. The church "Philadelphia" mentioned in Revelation to which the open door was to be revealed, of course was his own little flock. As the year 1880, the close of the exemption period, drew near, preparations were made, not only in the "Salt Tract" in Samara, but also in Peters' congregation in Molotschna, for the most visionary adventure in all Mennonite history—an exodus to a wild, unknown barren land, in the heart of a Mohammedan population to meet the Lord and inaugurate the millenium. At the same time a special delegation from the group had succeeded at St. Petersburg in securing from the Governor General of Russian Turkestan, General Kauffman, permission to locate near Tashkend, with a promise of military exemption. Epp's followers accordingly sold their property, and started out in their quest for Utopia.

They left in several groups. The first train of ten families, seventeen wagons, and forty horses, set out on July 3, 1880, heading toward the east, accompanied for a short distance by relatives, prospective fellow wanderers, and friends, chanting a well known old hymn as a fitting song,

Our journey is through the wilderness to the promised Canaan

For fifteen long weeks these pious pilgrims continued to drag their weary way through the Ural mountain passes, across vast stretches of barren plains uninhabited save by bands of roving nomads, desert wastes, enduring all sorts of hardships, until they finally reached Kaplan Bek, some fifteen miles from Tashkend, where they prepared to camp for the winter. Twelve children had been buried along the way. In the course of the following months

many more, children and adults, died of typhoid fever and other epidemics.

A little later in the fall, another party of thirteen families from the Salt Tract, and one of fifty-six families from the Molotschna, under the leadership of elder Peters, had started out. Both of these groups, after enduring hardships equally as distressing as those suffered by the first party, reached their destination late in the fall. The latter remained in Tashkend for the winter; the former joined their Samara brethren. These three different groups now, having an elder among them in the person of elder Peters, formed a common church organization. But when Epp who still remained in Samara, heard of this arrangement, he protested vigorously, claiming that his flock needed no human leadership, but would depend entirely in all its decisions upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of this jealousy between the Samara and Molotschna groups, and also because of their conflicting views regarding the acceptance of non-combatant military service, they decided to separate. The following spring elder Peter's party with a small contingent of the more liberal element of the Epp following, all told perhaps a hundred families, finally agreed to accept the same forestry service which was demanded of their brethren back in the home colonies; and which now since the death of the Czar Alexander II was also being required in the Asiatic possessions of the empire. They were granted a tract of land at Aulie Ata, along the Talus river, on an elevated plateau near the foothills of the Alexander mountains, about one hundred and fifty miles northeast of the city of Tashkend. Before the world war this settlement consisted of five villages, with a Mennonite population of about one thousand, approximately half of whom at that time were members of the Mennonite Brethren persuasion.

In the meantime, the last of the wagon trains from Samara, consisting of seventy wagons, carrying twenty-five families, under the leadership this time of Claas Epp himself, got off to a late start in September for the promised land. Due to the lateness of the season, the party ran into fierce snow storms in their passage through the mountains, intense cold, and icy roads. They experienced suffering even beyond that of the other groups. The repeated breaking down of their wagons, sickness, deaths, births, and even a wedding delayed their progress so that they did not reach Turkestan until after Christmas, after a long and tedious journey of four months. Here they decided to remain for the winter.

The following spring Epp took charge of the whole Samara group, such as had not already decided to remain under the somewhat saner leadership of elder Peters, some sixty families all told; and refusing the non-combatant service for their young men now required in most of Russian Turkestan, as well as in Russia proper. Epp hoped for a time that he might find refuge in nearby Bokhara, where Russian jurisdiction had not yet been completely established. The Emir of Bokhara, however, claiming a scarcity of food supplies for his own people, ordered the wanderers out of his country. Entering Turkestan, where Russian military laws now were in force, they were requested by the Governor General of that Russian tributary to send their young men into the army. Anticipating the winding up of all things earthly before long anyway, Epp was not in a hurry to obey the order, as a result of which his party was again sent across the border into Bokhara. After having been driven back and forth across the border repeatedly, and living in their wagons for months in a sort of neutral zone between these two jurisdictions, on land owned by a rather liberal minded noblemen, Epp, finally, in 1882, received an invi-

tation from the Khan of Khiva to locate on the latter's private estate where the party might enjoy the religious and political liberties they desired.

Regarding this invitation as the open door spoken of in Revelation, Epp decided to lead his weary seekers after the millenium to Khiva. Leaving Bokhara, traveling north, and crossing an intervening desert by camel and horse, the small party finally reached the river Lausan, a tributary of the Amu, down which they journeyed by boat until they reached the location selected for their settlement by the Khan.

But this open door only proved to be one to further trouble. The first settlement was located in a low, disease infested swamp, along the river bank; the first mud houses with thatched roofs were neither rain nor flood proof. Finding these non-resistant settlers an easy prey, the natives, too, soon began to steal their horses; and finally increasing in their boldness entered their houses in nightly raids, stealing whatever they wanted, even in several cases attempting to carry away some of the young women. In one of these raids one of the settlers was murdered by the marauders. The young men finally demanded permission from the leaders to defend themselves with effective weapons; but the only means of defense allowed them by the church authorities was permission to remain up all night armed with canes and clubs. These weapons, however, were no match for the swords and guns of the bandits; and the church authorities were finally forced to strain their extreme non-resistant principles to the extent of asking protection from the Khan. The latter sent them a group of soldiers for a time, but as soon as these were withdrawn the depredations were renewed. Finally the much harassed settlers were offered a refuge by the Khan near the city of Khiva, in a small place called Ak Metchedj, where they would

no longer be troubled by robbers. A traveller passing through this little colony in 1899 states that their population statistics then included thirty-seven families, with one hundred forty souls, living in small adobe huts, and one hundred thirty-two in the nearby cemetery.

Meanwhile, millennialist Epp increased in fanaticism day by day. He was now guided largely in his every day activities by his dreams and visions. For every mystery in Revelation he now found a new explanation. He himself was to be one of the two witnesses to the ushering in of the Lord's appearance on earth. A fellow minister with whom he had quarreled, and whom he had excommunicated from his church, now became the Red Dragon of Revelation, whose expulsion was celebrated for some years by his small flock. Other similar holidays were added, while less and less was being made of the old holy days. Soon Epp was to meet Elijah in the skies, and with him be transported bodily to Heaven. The time was actually set for this important event; and an audience of both the faithful and doubtful gathered to bid the celestial traveller farewell. An altar had been set up behind which Epp took his stand, dressed in his ascension robes, all ready for the great departure. It is said by some of those present that he actually disappeared, but no one would verify the fact of his ascension.

Finally, the great day for Christ's appearance was also set, March 8, 1889. The day came and passed, and nothing happened. The disappointed prophet who evidently had given a satisfactory explanation for his reappearance on earth after his flight to Heaven some time before, now again found little difficulty in giving good reason for his failure to gauge accurately the coming of Judgment day. He had been given his earlier clew, he said, by the dial of an old wall clock whose hands had pointed to 89. But now in a vision he had been shown

that the clock had indicated the wrong number since it had been leaning to one side. Upon being set upright, the dial pointed to 91. That was to mark the end—the year '91. Epp reached the climax of his fanatical career when he finally claimed that he was the son of Christ, as Christ was the son of God, thus constituting the fourth person of the Godhead. After this he insisted, in all his religious ceremonies, upon the use of the formula Father, Sons, and the Holy Ghost. This was too much, of course, for even his most simple minded followers. Many had been cured of their foolish beliefs early in their adventure. In the eighties a group had left him and came to America; some went back to Russia to take up the same type of forestry service they might have had in the beginning. Others joined the Aulie Ata group; a mere handful, as misguided as Epp himself, remained with him almost to the last, but not quite. Finding their leader's idiosyncracies and blasphemies no longer bearable, the small remnant finally had to cast him out of their fellowship. He died in 1913. Disillusioned by their false hopes, and sobered by their harrowing experiences, this small group of deluded, though sincere religious enthusiasts finally developed into a fairly stable congregation. Before the world war the little flock consisted of some twenty-five families, huddled together on a land complex of some fifteen acres, and devoted to small hand industry, a little gardening, and daily labor in the nearby city of Khiva.

This episode, one of the strangest in Mennonite annals, deserves this rather detailed treatment here because hereby hangs a moral of interest to Mennonites. Mennonites have been unusually susceptible to unwholesome influences of this sort. A number of times in past Mennonite history undue stress upon chiliastic and apocalyptic views on the part of fantatical leaders, has led to unfortunate results. Even today there is more teaching

of this sort in the church, originating largely in certain short cut millennialist Bible schools frequented by Mennonite preachers, than is wholesome for the church; and which in times of stress might easily lead to tragic results.

AFTER 1870

Forestry Service

The forestry service, which was offered the Mennonite young men in lieu of actual army duty was inaugurated in 1880. According to government regulations this work was to consist of planting and cultivating forests on the steppes of south Russia and the term of service was to be for four years. Almost the entire expense of the enterprise was to be met by the Mennonites themselves. They were to erect the barracks, feed and clothe the foresters, heat and care for the buildings, and assume nearly all the necessary expenses involved. The government was to pay each forester twenty kopeks each working day, the equal of about ten cents; and furnish only the working tools and implements.

To the church at large also, was committed the entire spiritual and cultural welfare of the young foresters. This duty was performed by a resident minister appointed by the home church for each barrack; a superintendent also was appointed to look after the economic and business interests of each unit. General oversight of the whole service in behalf of the church was entrusted to a Forestry Commission. In this way the cultural solidarity, which was such a characteristic feature of every phase of life in the closed communities of the Mennonite colonies, was not threatened by the forced absence of their young men serving the state during four very impressionable years.

The heavy expenses entailed by this service had to

be borne virtually by voluntary contributions from the various congregations, since the Mennonite church did not constitute a corporate, legal body with power to levy taxes. That the congregations responded so freely is a tribute to their denominational loyalty, as well as to their realization that the preservation of their special privileges demanded of all the fullest co-operation. While the contributions were more or less voluntary, yet the churches worked out a plan which aimed to distribute the burden fairly and equitably among the various congregations on the basis of ability to pay. An assessment was levied upon both individuals and corporations according to the value of their property. Persons holding property worth less than five hundred rubles were exempt. The whole burden was thus assumed as a common obligation of the entire church.

For some years the average enrollment of foresters remained about four hundred, at an average maintenance cost of approximately seventy thousand rubles, not counting the original cost of the buildings. As the Mennonite population increased, the number of men in the service did also. In 1913 the entire number of young Mennonites serving the government in this substitute capacity numbered about one thousand, at an expense to the church of three hundred and fifty thousand rubles. This was a peace time year of course; in war time there was a heavy increase in both men and money involved. This was the price in terms of money that the Mennonites of Russia were willing to pay for the preservation of their peace principles in the empire.

The General Conference

These common obligations, together with others, imposed upon and assumed by the Mennonite churches of the various branches, necessitated closer co-operation

among the various independent congregations, and a more united organization than had prevailed heretofore. The churches in general had maintained their traditional congregational and independent type of church government, although almost from the start necessity frequently demanded the periodic meeting of the elders to discuss common religious as well as secular questions. These meetings as already noted earlier in this chapter were spoken of as the *Church Council* of the elders, and were more or less local in their nature, dealing more or less with local religious matters. But now with the growing importance of such non-religious problems as forestry, schools, the preservation of the German language, and other questions more or less political in their nature, the need for a more compact working organization and a closer co-operation among the various loosely held together congregations than had hitherto prevailed, became evident. The *Mennonite Brethren* had organized such an institution as early as 1872. But so-called *Alt-kirchliche*, Old Mennonites did not follow with similar action until 1883, when they founded the *Allgemeine Bundes Konferenz* or General Conference.

The first meeting of this conference, held at Halbstadt, took a rather far look ahead in considering their general needs. Among other commendable projects, it was proposed that the church establish a theological seminary for the training of preachers, and a general church paper. Neither of these proposals came to fruition, strange to say, until well into the twenties of the present century, when during a brief breathing spell in the early generous days of liberty enjoyed under the Bolsheviks, a church paper, *Unser Blatt*, was actually established for a few years; it is needless to say that under the blighting influence of the Communist rule that followed its days were short. The seminary hardly got a

start. The work of the church was well organized by the conference. Laymen were given a prominent place in its deliberations. Special officials and commissions were appointed to look after various common interests, such as schools, relations with the state, and especially the forestry service.

Later sessions extended the scope of the conference. In 1885 steps were taken to found a deaf and dumb institution. In 1893 a new hymnal was published. In 1898 a new confession of faith was adopted, which had been drawn up by a special commission appointed at an earlier session. Frequently the conference busied itself with matters of church discipline and personal conduct, in an advisory capacity only, no doubt. In one of the sessions foresters were advised not to marry while in service, very good advice under the circumstances. In another, teachers were advised to conduct their Christmas exercises in the schools in a Christian spirit, and especially exclude objectionable dramatic performances. In still another, marriage between cousins was discouraged. The session of 1910 held a Schoensee was of special importance. For the first time the Mennonite Brethren attended the conference, although they had been invited to do so some years before. Several ministers were also appointed to visit the churches in Siberia, and distribute such financial aid among them as they needed.

By this time, too, the Russianization program of imperial minister Stolypin had proceeded so far as to demand that all the delegates to the conference be certified to the imperial government, that the record of the proceedings be published in the Russian language, and that an official representative of the government be permitted to attend every session. These demands of course had to be complied with, but since many of the preachers could not yet speak Russian readily, and others could not read

it, this Russian report was usually translated into German for general distribution.

In fact during all this period, since 1880, the Czars and their reactionary ministries, with occasional brief spells of liberalism, fighting back the rising tide of nationalism and parliamentarism which threatened the overthrow of the Russian autocracy, were becoming more and more suspicious of special liberties and privileges. In the attempt to stamp out the growing spirit of nationalism among the Poles, Finns, Lithuanians, Germans and other minorities on the outskirts of the empire, increasingly drastic measures were invented, hoping thereby that all these foreign elements might ultimately become good Russians. The Russianization program included, already suggested, increased control of schools, use of the Russian language, censorship of the press and free speech, and curtailment of political liberties in general. The Mennonites of course suffered with the rest.

Although the Mennonites took no active part in the radical social and political agitation of the times, yet they were severely attacked in the press and before the government officials by many of the Slavophile partisans who were envious of such special privileges as the Mennonites still enjoyed, and likely suspicious of their Germanic culture. In the brief liberal revolution of 1905 the Mennonites took no active part, although, since they, too, were given the right to vote they availed themselves of this privilege in the elections of the period. Being opposed to radical socialism, they for the most part joined the more conservative Octobrist party in their political affiliations, largely because this party guaranteed religious toleration and freedom of worship, as well as freedom of the press for the minority groups. Two Mennonites sat in the Duma in the years immediately following, though not directly elected by the Mennonites themselves—

Abraham Bergman, a landlord of the Octobrist party, member of the third and fourth sessions; and Peter Schroeder, from Crimea, member of the Cadet party which was still more liberal than the Octobrists, but also favorable to concessions to subject peoples. Schroeder was a member of the fourth Duma.

In 1908 the General Conference appointed a "Commission on Faith" which in 1912 was changed into a *Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten*, and which in turn practically resolved itself in the critical days that followed into a commission on church and state relations. During the years just preceding the world war this commission, among other arduous tasks, found it increasingly difficult to convince the government that Mennonites were not a "sect," but one of the regularly recognized religious confessions; for as a sect they would lose not only their special privileges, but would become subject to all the arbitrary and brutal treatment then being meted out to all small religious groups that were branded with the name "sect." Both as Germans and as a still privileged religious group, the Mennonites were becoming objects of suspicion to many in high authority. The world war and its after results only increased their troubles.

Population Pressure and Expansion 1870-1914

As already noted, the original Mennonite settlements were granted more land than was immediately taken up by the model estates first distributed to each head of a family. This surplus land area was reserved as a communal reserve possession, the income from which was set apart as a special fund to be used later in helping to purchase new homes for the surplus population that had outgrown its original land allotment. This general colonial policy was followed from time to time throughout

the century by the daughter and granddaughter colonies as their numbers increased.

And so, compact Mennonite communities expanded throughout southern Russia, always following the cheaper lands on the advancing frontier, toward the southeast into Asia, northeast toward the Urals, and over into western Siberia. The landseekers were usually of the landless class, and frequently of the more radical or at least of the more emotional religious wings of the church. The Mennonite Brethren, the Templers and other offshoots from the main body were usually more numerous in the new settlements than in the old. The Russian Mennonites thus remained almost exclusively a farmer class; very few went to the cities. As among country people generally, who live in frontier regions where land is plentiful and labor scarce, the population growth here reached almost its biological limits. The original Mennonite population in Russia in 1820 of about nine thousand had doubled about every twenty-five years, reaching by 1914, including the emigrants to the American prairies, and their descendants, where land conditions were like those of Russia, the total of about one hundred and seventy thousand, a population growth unequalled anywhere else among Mennonites.

Church membership, too, quite contrary to what one finds among Mennonites in other parts of Europe, in Russia about equalled the expansion of the people. The growth of the church in Russia was rather a swarming of the people than an expansion of a faith. Forbidden by their charter of privileges to make converts among the natives, and kept from leaving their own religious group by the danger of losing their special privileges in case they did, and the sense of superior culture—all these forces tended to keep all Mennonites within the fold; and the fold from expanding beyond their own flesh and blood. Absent,

too, were many of the causes that in other parts of Europe continually threatened the existence of the Mennonite faith—city life, persecution, a superior outside cultural environment, isolation in small scattered groups making organized church life difficult, intermarriage with non-Mennonites, and other disintegrating influences.

Although a number of small daughter colonies had been established during the first half of the century, yet the large swarming of the people for economic or conscientious reasons did not set in until the sixties or seventies. Although some of these daughter colonies have been mentioned earlier in this chapter, a brief mention again of the most important in the way of a summary may not be out of place here.

The first daughter community of this period was established in the *Crimea*, in 1862, by a group of Molotschna landseekers, who had first become acquainted with the fair fields about Simferopol while engaged in transporting the wounded from the battlefields to their own Molotschna homes during the Crimean war. These first settlements have since grown into twenty-five villages, and a number of large estates, in some cases including one hundred thousand acres, with a combined population in 1926, of about five thousand. The estates of course have since all been nationalized.

Fuerstenland, which was purchased from the Grand Duke Michael in 1864 by a group of Chortitz Mennonites, consisted in 1911 of five villages and a population of eighteen hundred. *Borsenko*, founded in 1865, also by a group from Chortitz, consisted in 1915 of five villages with a population of six hundred. One of the largest communities of this time at *Sagradovka*, in the province of Cherson, was purchased in 1871 by Mennonites from the Molotschna colony. In 1918 this settlement consisted of sixteen villages and six thousand souls, exclusive of

those living on large private estates. During the sixties, too, a number of religious dissenters from the main body of Mennonites, who incidentally also belonged to the poorer classes established a colony in the *Kuban* and the *Caucasus*. The large migration to America in the seventies, largely for conscience sake, but also partly for economic reasons, will be given more detailed treatment later in this book.

This large migration to America relieved the population pressure for a time, but in 1885 another Molotschna daughter colony was founded at *Memrik*, which by 1910 had expanded to a land area of about twenty-five thousand acres, and a population of some three thousand. After this, population expansion began on a generous scale to the frontier lands far to the east near the European boundaries of the empire.

Beginning with the middle nineties, some thirty villages were located beyond the Volga in the provinces of *Orenburg* and *Ufa*, near the Ural foothills. The settlement of some fifteen villages made in 1901 in *Terek*, a province in the southeastern corner of European Russia in the Caucasus near the Caspian sea, was a blunder. Drought, and paradoxical though it may seem, floods, famine, robbery by bandits, malaria—all these nearly liquidated the settlement by 1914; then came the war which permitted the bandits from the foothills to drive the whole settlement back again to the mother colonies.

With the opening of the twentieth century, a large colonization movement started from both the younger settlements along the Volga, and the older colonies farther east toward the broad unsettled steppes of western Siberia. Each family here was aided by the mother colonies to the extent of four hundred rubles. During the years just preceding the war, one hundred villages were established near *Tomsk* and *Omsk* on cheap lands at first far

from the Siberian railroad, but later with better transportation and market facilities, on a land area of over one million acres, nearly one-half the size of all the land occupied by the entire Russian Mennonite population; and with a total population, in 1914, of fifteen thousand souls.

Industrial Growth

Although the Mennonites remained largely a farming people, yet they did not entirely neglect their industrial interests. For the first half century of their life in Russia, their industrial needs were supplied mainly by their own local workshops. Nearly every village had its own craftsmen. The tastes of the early settlers being simple, their imports from the outside were few. They ground their own wheat in their own mills; grew their own wool which they wove into cloth and cut their own clothes. They made their own crude farm utensils; constructed their own simple furniture; and built their own brick ovens. The statistics for Chortitz in 1819, show that in a population of two thousand, eight hundred and eighty-eight people, distributed through eighteen villages, there were two clock-makers, nine turners, two coopers, eighty-eight joiners, twenty-six carpenters, sixteen smiths, forty-nine weavers, one dyer, twenty-five tailors, twenty shoe-makers, besides several brewers, millers, and others, not all perhaps working full time at their respective trades.

With the coming of large scale wheat growing, however, during the latter half of the century, and the demand for better farm machinery, big flour mills and large factories arose, which not only supplied all the local needs, but whose products in course of time found a ready market throughout all south Russia. Halbstadt and Chortitz both became famous in course of time for their production of fine farm machinery. In 1911 eight of the largest of these establishments furnished ten percent of

all such machinery of south Russia; and six percent of all that was manufactured in the entire Russian empire. The largest of these Mennonite firms, Lepp and Wallman, from Schoensee produced in one year, fifteen thousand mowers, three thousand threshing machines, besides thousands of gang plows and other farm utensils, all sent to the remotest parts of the empire.

As just indicated, Mennonite manufacturers confined themselves largely to farm machinery and flour mills. Their flour mills, too, were famous, and numerous. Textile mills, once a promising industry, vanished with the passing of sheep raising as a major occupation. The establishment of a large starch factory proved a failure. Other small industries, more or less local, embraced vinegar factories, brick yards, breweries, cheese factories, and the like. Mennonites never took to trade; and there were few merchants among them. Outside of a few cooperative stores, merchandising was often left to native Russians, and the Jews, who had no scruples against excessive profits.

Benevolences

Mennonites not only in Russia, but everywhere, especially when living in large compact communities have been inclined to hold themselves aloof from the usual political and social activities of their governments. In Russia they were never a burden to their government, either. They always took care of their poor and unfortunate. Mennonite self sufficiency here extended through the whole field of social welfare. They established their own hospitals, orphan homes, insurance companies, old peoples homes, a school for the deaf and dumb, and in 1911, a sanitarium for epileptics and those with nervous diseases.

The Mission Interest

With the revival of their religious life in the latter part of the past century, the Russian Mennonites also developed an interest in missionary effort. In 1881 the pioneer missionary, Henry Dirks, returning from the Dutch Mennonite mission work in Sumatra, became the elder of the Gnadenfeld congregation, and travelling secretary of the mission cause; in which capacity he aroused a growing interest in missionary effort. The work in Russia was carried on through the Dutch Society in Amsterdam, in which the Russian Mennonites were represented by a board member. At the close of the century the Russian church furnished the major portion of both the money and the workers for this society. In 1910 there were ten active missionaries of the Old Mennonites in Sumatra and Java, while four had returned on furlough. The Bolshevik revolution stopped all active participation of the Russian Mennonites in the Dutch enterprise, with the result that the work of the society almost came to a standstill. The Mennonite Brethren were also greatly interested in the missionary cause from the beginning of their separate existence, but they supported the efforts of the Baptists.

Cultural Life

Culturally, the Mennonites were only slightly influenced by their Russian environment. They retained their German inheritance and Mennonite traditions to the end. Many of the elders, and most of the older people spoke Russian with difficulty, if at all. By 1897 the statistics indicate that at that time, of the whole Mennonite population, only four hundred and eighty-six were designated as being Russian speaking, and most of these no doubt were no longer living in the colonies, and not

in close touch with their kinsfolk. The younger people of course were being taught the Russian language in the schools, and were absorbing more or less of Russian culture. The language of the pulpit, however, and of the books generally read remained German; that of every day speech some sort of *Platt-Deutsch*.

Being a farmer folk, the Mennonites of Russia were not of a literary turn of mind. They wrote few books, and such doctrinal and controversial pamphlets as they produced were of little value; and none of literary quality with the possible exception of a book of poems by Bernhard Harder. Their reading matter was imported from Germany, and consisted in the early days of the works of Menno Simons, Dirk Philips, The *Martyrs Mirror* occasionally, the *Wandelnde Seel*, perhaps Arndt's *Wahre Christenthum*, and in some circles the writings of Jung-Stilling, a German mystic. But even these books were no longer read by the younger generation near the close of the century. The Mennonite Brethren were inclined to read the works of the German Baptists. The only writings of any permanent value were those of the local Mennonite historians—Peter Hildebrand, D. H. Epp, Franz Isaac, Franz Bartsch, M. Klaassen, P. M. Friesen and others; but even these works were not widely known, with the exception of the last.

With the opening of the new century, however, there seemed to be some prospects of a new interest in matters cultural. A number of the younger men, graduates of European Universities, were beginning to show some ability as writers and artists, even though the learned professions were still rather relatively few in number. There were a number of doctors, practically no lawyers, a few promising sculptors, and several embryo story writers, a lot of teachers and preachers, of course, but these latter without much special training.

The *Botschafter*, first published in 1905 at Ekaterin-slav, though privately printed, was the official organ of the Old Mennonites; and the *Friedenstimme* published at Halbstadt for the first time in 1903, served the same purpose for the Mennonite Brethren. The publishing firm of *Raduga* founded in Halbstadt by several enterprising Mennonites published during its brief existence a number of books and tracts of interest to Mennonites especially, and widely distributed throughout the Mennonite settlements. A number of year books also were published by these privately owned firms. But the anti-German legislation, and later the revolution put an end not only to the German printed literature, but ultimately to all religious reading matter and the publishing houses.

Improvement of the school system kept pace during this period with progress elsewhere in spite of governmental interference, largely, however, in what might be called secondary education. The Mennonites of Russia were not greatly interested as yet in higher academic training. But in every colony there was likely to be a Central school, the chief aim of which was to train teachers for the public schools. Several girl's schools had been established, and a commerce school at Halbstadt, which regarded commercial subjects, however, as a mere side issue. One of the leading spirits before the war of this school was the well known Bible teacher, Professor Benjamin H. Unruh.

The statistics for the year 1910 indicate that in that year there were, in all the Mennonite settlements, about four hundred elementary schools with approximately five hundred teachers, nearly all men, except for the special girls' schools, with an attendance in total of about fifteen thousand children. Besides, there were thirteen Central schools, and four for girls, in addition to the special institution for the deaf and dumb. About two hundred young

men and women were attending higher institutions of learning in Russia, and about fifty in foreign Bible schools and Universities, mostly Swiss and German.

The Ministry

No religious people ever rise higher in their cultural achievements than the intellectual level of their spiritual leadership. For the largest part of the century the ministry in Russia was selected from the farmer group by lot; and, being unsalaried, were chosen from the wealthier land owners. Thus the ministry enjoyed unusual influence over the destinies of the whole people during the first half of the century, when the landlords, ministers and political leaders were all from the same economic class. Even though this high calling tended later in the century to become more highly specialized, yet preaching as a profession still remained very much an avocation to farming or teaching perhaps. As late as 1910 it was estimated that among the Mennonite Brethren only five percent of the preachers received financial support from their congregations; and even in this small number were included the itinerant evangelists who of necessity had to depend on such support. In this same year in a list of one hundred and fifty preachers from both branches of the church, one hundred and ten had only finished the elementary schools; forty had had some theological or pedagogical training in the Central schools; and only one had a University education. Of the five hundred ministers among the one hundred thousand Mennonites of Russia, perhaps two-thirds had neither theological training nor special preparation for their high calling.

Just before the war, however, there were indications of rapid changes. Teachers in both the elementary and Central schools were increasingly being impressed into the ministry. A number of young men were abroad in

religious training schools preparing for service in the home churches. Sentiment in favor of financial support of the ministry was also rapidly gaining ground throughout the churches.

Culture Above Other Germans

In conclusion, it is quite evident that by 1914 the Mennonites of south Russia enjoyed not only a degree of material prosperity, but also in spite of their untrained spiritual leadership, a state of culture far above the level of their Russian neighbors, and somewhat above that of their fellow German colonists.

THE WORLD WAR AND AFTER

We began this chapter with the observation that the Russian Mennonites, in the beginning, enjoyed here in the land of the most autocratic ruler of all Europe, a degree of religious toleration and civil liberty, and special privileges unparalleled in all Mennonite history. But we must close it with the disappointing confession that since the World War they have suffered a succession of tragedies—political oppression, religious persecution, destruction of property, famine, disease, rapine, and wholesale massacre far beyond that experienced even by their Dutch forefathers in the darkest days of the inquisition.

Civilization after all is only a thin veneer. Scratch but its surface, and you soon reach the savage instincts from which we all began our long and painful march toward a better world. The rights of conscience, the democratic processes of government, the economic security, the political stability, and the prospects of a peaceful world which in those happy days before 1914 we thought had been won forever through ages of struggle, we found,

after all, to be but an illusion. Seemingly we have slipped back centuries in many respects in the long upward climb toward these worthy goals, and we must start all over again. No student of Mennonite history would have ventured to prophesy a generation ago that Mennonites would ever again have to live through such a succession of horrors as those experienced by our Russian brethren since 1917.

Of course many of the Mennonite leaders had realized for some time that with the advance of democracy the enjoyment of special privileges would become increasingly difficult. As already noted, control of their schools, exclusive use of the German language, local political autonomy, and other special concessions at first freely granted the early settlers above those enjoyed by the native Russians, were already well on the way toward liquidation even before the war. Exemption from military service especially remained a source of envy on the part of their Russian neighbors, and was severely criticized by the public press. Speaking the German language, and in close cultural contact with the fatherland, the Mennonites were suspected and openly accused of German sympathies by the super-patriots of Russia. During the early stages of the war it was seriously suggested by certain authorities that their young men be removed from their home settlements and sent to work in the coal mines of western Siberia. This plan fortunately was not carried out. Instead, within a few months after the opening of hostilities, the Mennonite leaders were summoned to St. Petersburg to arrange for some suitable service for their young men within the limits of the special privileges they were still enjoying. It was finally agreed that the Mennonites should either remain in the forestry service or enter the Sanitary department, largely devoted to hospital work. About twelve thou-

sand young Mennonites entered these two departments during the course of the war, about equally divided.

Non-combatant War Service

Those choosing forestry were assigned guard duty, largely protecting the widely scattered forests of Russia against thieves, illegal hunters, fire and other hazards. Their duties were by no means easy. Supported entirely by the home churches, given no government support and little attention, often poorly clad, poorly sheltered, with inadequate food, cold and hungry, unarmed, marooned often in inaccessible forests, removed from their families who, too, had to shift for themselves, the lot of the forester, especially if married, was not a happy one. Repeated petitions from the churches at home requesting the government to adequately meet the needs of the foresters, and especially to provide for their families, if married, met with little response at St. Petersburg. After the downfall of the Czarist regime in 1917, six thousand foresters followed the army back home, and with the treaty of BrestLitovsk, in 1918, this special form of Mennonite service to the state came to an end.

The other young Mennonites were attached to the sanitary department, forming complete hospital units, including stretcher bearers who gathered the wounded on the battlefield, complete hospital trains transporting them back to hospitals at Ekaterinslav and Moscow, also fully manned by Mennonites. These units were reported to be among the best in the entire army. Some hundred and twenty Mennonites lost their lives on the battlefield and from disease while on duty during the war. The entire expense of the hospital, as well as the forestry work was met by the Mennonites themselves without government pay. It was estimated that in the year 1917, the last year of the war, the churches

collected over three million rubles for the support of their young men in these two forms of war service.

Regarded as Alien Germans

The Mennonites suffered with the other German colonists all the drastic anti-German legislation passed by the government of the Czar during the early stages of the war against such of his subjects as had a German ancestry even though three or four generations back. These colonists were regarded almost as enemy aliens rather than as loyal subjects. Everything German was tabooed—the use of the German language in public except in formal worship, the printing and distribution of German books and periodicals, and to a certain extent preaching, or performing wedding or funeral services in the forbidden tongue. Violation of these regulations invited punishment.

Since many of the older Mennonite preachers were not adept in the use of the Russian language in public, Mennonite worship frequently took on a liturgical character, consisting largely of Scripture reading without comment, singing and prayer in the forbidden tongue, a form of service which some of the more ingenious preachers occasionally knew how to manipulate so that it would preach as effective a lesson as if it had been a regular sermon. Naturally these German suspects were carefully watched for any sign of supposed friendliness toward the common enemy. It is reported of one zealous native superpatriot, not well versed in German, that he once charged a certain Mennonite preacher with having prayed for Kaiser Wilhelm; but whose only crime turned out to be that in the course of repeating the Lord's prayer he had uttered the petition *Dein Wille geschehe*, "Wille" having been mistaken by the Russian for Wilhelm.

Hoping to escape the consequences of this anti-Ger-

man agitation by disclaiming any German ancestry, the German speaking colonists, both Lutherans and Mennonites, insisted they were not real Germans. The Lutherans claimed a Swiss origin, while the Mennonites maintained that their ancestors had come originally from Holland, and only indirectly through Germany. The Russian authorities insisted, however, that since they were thoroughly saturated with German culture during their stay in Prussia, and spoke only the German language, and read German books, they thus must be regarded as Germans. *Hollaenderei* a certain Mennonite writer among them calls this attempt of the Russian Mennonites to deny their German heritage.

The most vicious of these anti-German regulations was the decree issued in 1915 ordering all the German colonists^{15a} to sell their land equities within a year. Obviously this could not be done within such a short period during the war time, except at ruinous prices; and but few complied with the law. The penalty for non-compliance was forcible sale by the Land Bank at such a price as such a sale might bring. The meager returns were then turned over to the owner, not in hard cash, but in twenty-five-year bonds of doubtful value at a low interest rate. Fortunately for the Mennonites, the Land-Bank, like everything else Russian, worked slowly; and the process of liquidation had hardly begun when the revolution of 1917 afforded a temporary breathing spell from all anti-German discrimination.

15a Just to keep the record clear the reader is again reminded here that the term "German Colonist" is used throughout this chapter to apply to both the Mennonites, who though of original Dutch descent yet through two centuries in Prussia had acquired both a German culture and the German language, as well as to the Lutheran and Catholic colonists who had come to Russia as original Germans. Irrespective of their Dutch biological inheritance the Mennonites will be spoken of throughout this chapter as Germans.

The expectation of relief, however, was tempered with certain misgivings among the German colonists, and especially among the Mennonites. While the anti-German land laws were not immediately enforced yet they were not repealed. The very fact, too, that the new government claimed to rest upon a thoroughly democratic basis was not altogether reassuring to such groups as had enjoyed special privileges under the Czar's regime; for strange though it may seem, the special privileges of a minority frequently fare better under an autocracy than in a democracy. The Kerensky government was avowedly Socialistic though the exact form that the Socialistic state was to take had not been thoroughly worked out. But there was much talk of political and economic re-organization along local and regional lines with a large degree of local autonomy. The German colonists, hoping that perhaps they might retain most of their old privileges by forming themselves into such compact German units, called a conference early in the summer of 1917 to take such steps as their interests might dictate. The Mennonites were also represented at this congress of Germans.

Mennonite Congress

But it was soon discovered that although the Mennonites had much in common with the other German colonists, yet their demand for a continuation of their exemption from military service under the new regime made it impracticable to work in complete accord with the other Germans, who were not insistent on such demands. The Mennonites, consequently, withdrew from this movement, and called a congress of their own, consisting of nearly two hundred delegates representing the whole Mennonite population, which met at Ohrloff later in the summer to take such steps as necessary to protect

their own special interests in the new order. A brief review of the questions discussed here suggests most effectively the nature of the problems which troubled the Mennonites at this time.

Benjamin Unruh, prominent member of the Mennonite Brethren church at Halbstadt, professor in the Commerce school at that place and a few years later to become one of the delegates of the *Studien Kommission* sent to America, was elected as chairman of the Congress.¹⁶ Among the questions discussed after a resolution had been passed perfecting a permanent "All Mennonite Congress" with an executive Committee to act in its stead in the interims, called the *Mennocentrum*, were the relation of the Mennonites to the state, land liquidation, military exemption, schools, and such other matters as affected the cultural and religious life of the Mennonite people. The debates which sometimes became animated and earnest showed that there was not always unanimity on all questions discussed. Some, the landless perhaps, were not unreservedly opposed to a limited program of land redistribution, though few were out and out Socialists. On the military question, too, there was some difference of opinion on direct and indirect service. While some were absolutists, opposed to both indirect and direct service, others maintained that they owed the state every obligation except the actual shedding of blood. To these latter, troubled with neither a keen sense of logic nor a tender conscience, compromise with the government might not have been a difficult question. Chairman Unruh, better acquainted with the political trends of the times than the average, called attention to the fact that the Mennonites had now come to the turning of the road

¹⁶ This congress must not be confused with the regular *Allgemeine Bundes Konferenz* which also held a session during the summer. This meeting is called a congress, not a conference.

in their exemption privileges, as well as in their non-resistant faith; and that it was not at all certain as to what they might expect from the new government. They must be prepared for the worst. The support of the young men in the forestry and sanitary service was also a matter of considerable interest, for the war was still on at this time, and as already suggested, the Mennonites had to pay all the expenses of their young men in the field out of their own pockets. The total amount needed for the coming year it was estimated would be about three million and five hundred thousand rubles,—over one million and five hundred thousand dollars. The families left at home, where married men had to serve, had to be provided for also.

The fall of the Kerensky government in October of 1917, not only shattered the hope among the Mennonites of an immediate amelioration of their lot, but on the other hand inaugurated a three year reign of terror and suffering among both Mennonites and the whole population of southern and eastern Russia almost unequalled among any civilized people in modern history. The Red and White armies fighting back and forth across the Ukraine, confiscated the people's live stock and food supplies, and spread disease epidemics everywhere. In the interim lawless hordes of outlaws, made up of the discontented, the criminal classes and rabble in general, marched through the country at will, plundering, raping and killing. Even when the Bolsheviks gained control of the situation and established a certain degree of stable political order, material conditions were not immediately improved; for the new rulers nationalized all the landed estates and replaced highly industrious and efficient Mennonite farmers with ignorant and inexperienced city folk as farm managers. The period of occupation by the German army during the summer of 1918 was a pleasant

interlude. Worst of all among the Germans of the Ukraine was the rule of a certain bandit, Machno, by name, who held sway in this region during the winter of 1919-20.

The Reign of Machno

A few random incidents here must suffice as a suggestion of the horrors the Mennonites of this region suffered at this time. A victim of the terror from the village of Münsterberg in the Sagradovka colony speaks as follows—

“On the evening of November 19, 1919, a band of a thousand men invaded six of our villages here, bent on robbery and murder. Our daughter Marie and her husband and six children were murdered in cold blood. Her daughter Mary, 8 years old was struck on the head with a sword and severely cut, but finally recovered. But our son John, who had taught for ten years at Ohrloff, was murdered. Our whole village is in ruins except a few huts. Our land has been taken from us, and we are living now in Tiege with our youngest daughter. I myself was robbed of all we had, but my life was spared by the grace of God. Very few families escaped. Nearly everybody in our village was struck down or murdered—old men of eighty as well as infants of a few weeks. This terror lasted from 7 to 8 o’clock, and during that time ninety-six persons were killed. After the bandits had robbed us of all our money and such personal belongings as they could carry with them they set fire to the buildings and departed for the other villages.”¹⁷

In another village in this same district these fiends in human form cut off the heads of eight of the men they had killed, and then placed the heads on chairs as a gruesome welcome to the absent master of the house when he would open the door on his return.

In Eichenfeld of the Nicolaipol colony eighty-one

¹⁷ *Mennonitische Rundschau*, March 21, 1923.

men and four women were killed in one night. Only two men of the entire population above sixteen years of age were left.

Fourteen men in Blumenort, were driven into the cellar of a house one night and then blown to pieces with hand grenades.

These were a few of the extreme cases to be sure, but in nearly every village visited by the bandits there was more or less of wanton destruction of property and murder, and especially of robbery. Even worse than this, was the torture inflicted on men for the purpose of extracting the last penny from the victim though the last penny had long been spent; and the wholesale rape of the women, who at the point of a gun frequently had to sacrifice their honor to save the life of a father or husband. Hundreds of men and women were killed outright in the Mennonite villages visited during these raids, whole villages destroyed, and an untold amount of personal property carried away. Other German non-Mennonite villages and some Russians in the Ukraine suffered the same fate. The Old Colony, Sagradovka, and Nicolaipol suffered most among the Mennonite colonies; Molotschna somewhat less; and the Crimea and Memrik very little.

Disease Epidemics

Hard upon this trail of robbery, murder and rapine followed disease epidemics spread by the Red and White armies as well as by the robber bandits—spotted typhus, cholera and venereal diseases. While Machno killed his hundreds, typhus and cholera claimed its thousands. Of course the whole population of south Russia was affected more seriously than the German colonies, but we are concerned here only with the Mennonites. Here again the Chortitz district was the most intense sufferer. In

the village of Chortitz, with a population of a little less than seven hundred, nearly everybody was sick. One hundred and fifty died. O. O. Miller, who as a representative of the American Mennonite Relief committee visited the Molotschna Mennonites soon after this period, speaking of the destruction caused by both the civil war and bandits as well as disease, is authority for the statement that by March, 1920, in the Chortitz district with a pre-war Mennonite population of fifteen thousand, sixteen out of some ninety villages were completely destroyed with no inhabitants left whatever; three hundred and eighty persons were shot or struck down and tortured; ninety-two women raped; forty-two houses burned; one hundred and eleven homes destroyed; one hundred and thirteen horses taken; also one thousand, seven hundred and seventeen cows, one thousand and seventy-three hogs, forty thousand bushels of wheat, ten thousand bushels of barley. Those stricken with typhus numbered eight thousand of whom twelve hundred died. These statistics taken perhaps too early to be entirely correct, yet indicate the terrible conditions of the time in the Mennonite settlements. Under such distress it is needless to say that there was little of economic activity, and no social functions, nor organized religious services. All organized life was paralyzed.

Selbstschutz

It was undoubtedly inevitable that the traditional doctrine of passive resistance, which too often had become a mere doctrine, and no longer a guiding principle of life among the Mennonite young men, should be put to a severe test when challenged by robber bands who threatened to murder their men and ravish their women. The young men of the Molotschna district, where seemingly there always had been less regard for traditions than

among the Chortitz Mennonites, did not stand the test. Even before the robber bands came, the young men in this colony, influenced largely by the Germans during their brief occupation of the Ukraine in 1918, organized themselves into a *Selbstschutz*, a protective band, for the purpose of offering resistance to whatever dangers might threaten them in the future. At the time, no doubt, there was perhaps little thought that force might ever be needed or used. But when the bandits actually appeared in the region the following year these "Selbstschutzers" joined the neighboring Lutheran colony in an organized attempt to resist the invaders. For a short time they gave a good account of themselves, but in the end the invading force was too much for them; both the Lutherans and Mennonites had to disband, and leave their colonies to the mercy of the invaders. In later years the older generation of Mennonites as represented in Conferences officially condemned the *Selbstschutz* as a tactical blunder as well as a violation of their traditional peace principles; and some of the young men, too, confessed their mistake; for when the Machno bandits had gotten control of the Mennonite villages they were especially anxious to seek out the "Selbstschutzers" for cruel treatment. Under the Soviet regime also in the years following, this digression from the avowed peace practise of the Mennonites, was used by the Soviet authorities as an added reason why the request of the Mennonite leaders for the retention of their former exemption from military service in lieu of some other service should not be granted.

Famine

It would seem that the terrors of civil war, the ravages of banditry, the persecutions of a tyrannical and anti-religious government and the devastations caused by

disease epidemics—all the result of man's greed and lust would be enough grief for any people to bear at any one time; but it was as though Providence itself had entered the lists against the ill fated Russian people when in 1921-22 it sent the Ukraine, the bread basket of Europe, a series of dry years which resulted in the worst famine in all Russian history. South Russia had often experienced both drouth and famine before; under normal conditions these were never serious. But conditions now were not normal. The loss of horses without which farming operations could not be carried on, and of live stock; the heavy grain requisitions demanded for export, leaving very little surplus for an emergency, and often not enough for the next year's seeding; the physical weakness of both man and beast; the careless management of many of the larger estates resulting from the replacement of industrious farmers by ignorant and inefficient city bred managers; the collapse of the whole transportation system; and above all the hopelessness of it all—all this now, together with two years of hot winds and drouth made a combination that spelled disaster for nearly a third of the whole Russian population, taking the lives of millions of native Russians and thousands of Germans and Mennonites. The Mennonites, because of their superior industry, and general intelligence, fared better than the other Russians, though the list of those who died of starvation, and as a result of famine was a heavy one.

It is not the intention here to present a statistical account of the famine casualties. A few pen pictures here and there, must suffice to give the reader a glimpse at least of its terror among both the native Russians and the Mennonites. Professor A. J. Miller, director of the American Mennonite Relief work during this period, graphically describes the famine conditions in the native Russian villages as he sees them from a car window on his

first journey from Moscow to the Mennonite settlements in the south.

"As we were going into the hunger districts, it was necessary to take with us food sufficient to last till our return to Moscow. All along the way were the evidences of starvation. At the railroad stations the sight was appalling. The moment the train halted it was besieged by living skeletons. From their bony frames hung filthy rags in place of clothing. The feet were wrapped in rags. Not with a rush did they come, but slowly, weakly; too starved to hurry, too famished even to demand; the skin dry and bloodless like parchment, the lips colorless, but the eyes haunted by fear like those of a hunted animal, and full of hopeless beseeching that wrung one's heart dry; from out the rags were lifted their bare arms, seemingly nothing but skin and bones, the wasted fingers extended toward the car windows in entreaty for food; slowly, haltingly, piteously muttering the one sentence that was being wailed despairingly by millions in Russia—"Chleb"—*Bread, in God's name, bread.* The words that resounded day after day in the ears of the American relief workers; that haunted their sleeping hours and woke them with a revulsion of fear and agony, the muscles quivering, the heart beating wildly, the body bathed in perspiration, until the nerves broke down completely." "Within the railroad station, whether large enough to accommodate a dozen or a thousand, the floor was usually covered with forms of human beings, lying or sitting or crouching, waiting for something to eat or for the chance to move to another station. Men, women, children and babies all jumbled together in a squirming mass of filth and vermin, sick of hunger and of typhus, bugs and lice passing from one to the other, spreading the terrible typhus which also claimed its multitude of victims."

"In our baskets was the food for our journey. Just outside the glass of the car window were human beings starving. If we give them our food they will live a little longer; if we do not, they will quite surely starve to death; and even if we do, they will probably live only a week or two more. But without our food we could not hope to work; we would weaken ourselves and probably bring on serious illness. Then the thousands would suffer instead of the few. So we had to keep the food in our baskets for ourselves; but

it had lost its taste, and it stuck in the throat when we tried to eat, for the picture of starving was ever before our eyes.”¹⁸

Speaking of his first arrival in the starving Mennonite colonies, Professor Miller says “At Alexandrowsk we were received as messengers from Heaven.” Abram Kroeker, a well known publisher in Halbstadt, forced into exile, and now in Canada, describes conditions among the Mennonites in the Molotschna colony—his figures seem a little too specific to be reliable, but in the main no doubt the picture is not overdrawn.

“The inhabitants, also those of a stout condition, grew terribly thin. The list shows, three hundred and twenty-six who died of famine, eight hundred and twenty-three families hungered, four hundred and sixty-nine families ate crows, seventy-one were fed on mice, seven hundred and fifty-five ate horse meat, three hundred and forty-four ate cats, one hundred and eighty-four families used dog’s meat, three hundred and eight families ate dead animals, more than two hundred and fifty families used leather as their nourishment. There were thirty-one farmers who uncovered their straw roofs in order to protect their stock during the winter. Bread was baked of beets, leaves, chaff, corn-cobs, pumpkins, bran, sugar cane, ground bones, oats, barley, thistles, weed seeds, linseed, bark of trees, saw dust, etc. If the American aid had not arrived during the last moment, half the population would have starved. Some of the Bolshevik officials are reported to have said that it was their desire to see at least half of the population die.”

In the nearby county of Prischib with eleven thousand population, mostly Lutherans and Catholics, where the aid came somewhat later, about one thousand people perished in the famine, mostly of the poorer classes. That place was usually known as having plenty of fuel—wood, straw and even coal. Since the Bolsheviks ordered that

¹⁸ Quoted from *Feeding the Hungry*, Hiebert and Miller pp, 198-199.

the woods which the Mennonite citizens had grown with great difficulty be destroyed, and the straw stacks had vanished from their yards, many suffered much because of the cold. Schools and hospitals had to be closed because of lack of heating material.¹⁹

C. F. Klassen, representing the Mennonites of eastern Russia and Siberia, in speaking of conditions in the Volga region summarizes the situation as follows—

“Villages entirely deserted, the thatched straw roofs of stables and houses taken down to feed the cow or the horse, flight from the village with the refugees dying in large numbers along the road side. The starving people cling desperately to life, prolonging their miserable existence by eating the seeds of weeds, the bark of trees, chaff or straw, gophers, rats, crows, cats, dogs, the carcasses of animals starved to death—anything to sustain life. Multitudes of refugees straggling along the roadways begging at each house for a morsel of bread. Bread, BREAD! in God’s name Bread!”²⁰

Famine and poverty lasted longer in the eastern settlements than among the Mennonites of south Russia. As late as 1923 after conditions had already greatly improved in the Molotschna and Chortitz areas a report from the Siberian Mennonites stated that among the seventeen thousand Mennonites in those settlements five thousand were without food of their own. Herman Riesen of the Old Samara colony after a tour of inspection to Siberia reports that

“about twenty-five percent of the Mennonite children up to approximately fourteen years of age, and some as old as sixteen, boys and girls, were going about stark naked; while many older ones including men and women had only tatters and rags hung about their bodies. These poorest had practically nothing left to wear. Some had sheep skins, but these they must save for the bitter cold of the Siberian winter.

19 *My Flight*, Abr. Kroeker. p. 70.

20 *Feeding the Hungry*, Hiebert and Miller, p. 188.

In many families there was clothing enough for only one person to go out into the cold while the others almost naked remained indoors. On the bedsteads of these poorer families, (and there were many such families) were only rags—no mattresses, no bed ticking, no pillows or pillow slips, no sheets, no blankets or covers. In such homes they simply slept in their clothing or rags, with sometimes an old overcoat or sheepskin to serve as a cushion or cover.”

“The children often slept on the floor on straw or weeds. One family had made a little pen next to the brick or clay stove, and into the straw of this pen the naked children crept to keep warm and to sleep. Many houses were built mostly of earth or sod, with only two rooms for the whole family, which was usually large, an earth floor, chilly in winter and the favorite resort of myriads of fleas in summer.”²¹

Feeding the Hungry

It is small wonder that the Mennonites as a result of these cumulative disasters, should again seek a way of escape by means of an exodus to some other promised land. The native Russians had no possibility of escape. They would have to remain and carry on as best they could. But to the Mennonites, limited in number, whose whole past history for four hundred years was characterized as a series of treks from one promised land to another, with many relatives and brethren already on this side of the Atlantic—to them escape from the Russian terror through another mass migration seemed possible and inevitable. This movement had already gained considerable momentum before the famine of 1921. The Siberian Mennonites had already written their Mennonite brethren in Amsterdam suggesting a loan either from the Dutch Mennonites, or the Dutch Government, running up into the millions, sufficiently large to transport the whole Mennonite population in Siberia, some twenty-five thousand, to one of the East India islands. The amount

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 316.

of money involved of course was too large to be given serious consideration by the Dutch Mennonites.

In the meantime, too, in the early summer of 1920, the Molotschna Mennonites had sent a commission called a *Studien Kommission*, headed by Benjamin H. Unruh, and A. A. Friesen, both professors in the Halbstadt schools, to America by way of Switzerland, Germany and Holland for the purpose of investigating the possibilities of aid for a mass migration out of Russia, preferably to America, as well as help to build up their economic life again in their native land. But to many, even before the famine, it was evident that the Mennonites, and especially Mennonitism was doomed in Russia. It was this Commission that first brought to America, and the outside world the news of the actual condition of their Mennonite brethren.

Although the plight of the Russian Mennonites had not yet reached its most acute stage by this time, yet the Commission succeeded in arousing a great deal of sympathy in behalf of their brethren among the Mennonites in the various countries they visited. Before the end of this year committees had been organized in all of them for the purpose of rendering such help as might be needed. The Germans, themselves, hard pressed economically, could not do much except to take care of such Mennonite refugees as had crossed the border; but they organized a special commission called "Help for Mennonite Refugees," (*Deutsche Mennoniten Hilfe*) (D. M. H.). The Dutch Mennonites rendered very substantial aid during the famine years through an organization christened with the same name by which the well known commission which helped the Swiss Mennonites to migrate to Pennsylvania in the early part of the eighteenth century, namely—"the General Commission for Foreign Needs," with

Ds. A. Binnerts, of Haarlem as chairman, and Ds. T. O. Hylkema of Giethoorn as Secretary. The American Mennonites, too, in the late summer of 1920, in a united effort, formed the "Mennonite Central Committee" with P. C. Hiebert, of Hillsboro, Kansas, a member of the Mennonite Brethren church as chairman; Levi Mumaw of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, representing the Old Mennonites as secretary; and Maxwell Kratz, a Philadelphia attorney, representing the General Conference. Later other members were added to represent other branches of the church.

Since the major part of the relief work fell to the American Mennonites a few details of their efforts seems justified here. The first task of the Mennonite Central Committee (hereafter, following the alphabetical rage of the times, to be known as the MCC) logically was to find out just what was needed. In this initial work, as well as in all the preliminary stages, the Old Mennonites took a leading part, for the reason that this branch of the church already had a well organized relief work in operation in the war zones, and had just established a Near East Relief station in Constantinople, on the very threshold into Russia. This work was largely in the hands of a group of devoted young men and women, mostly graduates of Goshen College. Entrance into Russia at this time was both difficult and dangerous, since the country was still in the throes of a bloody civil war. The MCC naturally turned to the group at Constantinople to furnish volunteers for the attempt to reach the Mennonite settlements. O. O. Miller, and Clayton Kratz, both Pennsylvanians, and Arthur Slagel of Illinois undertook the task. They reached Halbstadt just as Wrangel's army was driven to the south by the Bolshevists. Miller and Slagel escaped with Wrangel's army, but Kratz unfortunately remained a bit too long in Halbstadt, and has not been

heard from since. He likely was a victim of the Soviet terror.

By this time it had become evident that south Russia would face a serious food shortage, though the worst was not yet anticipated. All the energies of the various Mennonite organizations were now directed toward relief, and emigration for the moment was forgotten. The MCC, in the spring of 1921, appointed A. J. Miller, who had spent a year with the Friends Service Unit in France, and had recently been transferred to the American Red Cross work in the Crimea and Constantinople, as director of Russian Mennonite Relief. Miller's first task was to get in touch with the Soviet officials in Moscow, and get official permission to carry on this work of mercy among the Mennonites. This was not easy, for the Soviet government was still decidedly suspicious of all foreign influence. By dint of infinite patience and consummate tact, however, and after repeated contacts with the Red Cross organizations, the American Friends Service, and the Hoover American Relief Administration at Paris, London and Geneva, the new director was finally able, late in 1921, to sign a contract with Kamenev in Moscow, and later in the winter with the Soviet authorities in the Ukraine, permitting the foreign Mennonites to come to the assistance of their starving brethren in Russia. Miller at the same time represented the Mennonites of Holland, who had also been negotiating through their representative Ds. Jacob Koekebaker, for a similar agreement with the Soviets, in the signing of this contract. Koekebaker was compelled to return home before he had accomplished his task; and so authorized the American director to sign for the Dutch. One of the conditions in this agreement with the Soviet authorities was that there should be no discrimination between Mennonites and others who might need help in the regions where relief work was to be car-

ried on. Since the American and Dutch organizations chose as their fields of operation those areas in which the population was mostly Mennonite, thus most of their efforts were directed toward the helping of their own brethren. But within these areas all were equally taken care of, irrespective of creed or race.

A full year now had passed since the first efforts had been made to enter Russia for relief work. The famine by this time had assumed the proportions of a major calamity. The home organizations immediately began to collect funds, and clothing, and organize the working personnel. Following the example of the American Relief Administration, ARA, with whom the American and Dutch Mennonites had become affiliated, the American Mennonite Relief workers on the field, the AMR, established feeding kitchens in the Mennonite villages, and distributed food, first among the most needy. The detail work was left to local committees selected by the villages themselves. The Dutch carried on their own work separately. Actual feeding operations, started first in the Volga area, were not begun in the Ukraine until March 1922, after starving conditions had actually arrived. By May the American kitchens were feeding twenty-five thousand persons daily. The peak was reached in August when forty thousand rations were issued daily. This work was continued for three years, though the need became constantly less after the fall of 1922. The kitchen feeding was discontinued after the summer of 1924, though Director Miller remained in Russia for another two years to liquidate the work in the Ukraine, and also to direct further relief efforts in Siberia where famine conditions continued longer than in south Russia. Besides these feeding operations, many individual Mennonites in America sent food packets to friends and relatives and others in Russia. The AMR also sent some fifty Ford

tractors, into the Mennonite settlements, among the first to enter the Soviet Union, to take the place of the large number of draft horses that had been stolen or confiscated during the period of the civil wars, and which were so necessary for the cultivation of the fields.

It is estimated that about one million and two hundred thousand dollars were collected by the various branches of the American Mennonites during this period for this work, and several hundred thousand by the Dutch. How many Mennonites actually died of starvation, and the indirect results of famine of course, is a matter of some difference of opinion; but much less proportionately to be sure, than among the other Russians who, as we have already noted, died by the millions. But that the help from the American and Dutch Mennonites came just in the nick of time there can be no question. Without it, the death toll would undoubtedly have been increased by the thousands, a fact which the Russian Mennonites have repeatedly acknowledged and for which they have often expressed their profound gratitude.

The Trek to Canada

Although the famine may have delayed the emigration movement for several years, it only resulted in strengthening the determination of large groups of Mennonites to find refuge from their troubles in some more favorable land. The economic conditions, to be sure, were improving somewhat. And the recently inaugurated NEP policy also gave some promise that the Soviet government would proceed more cautiously and less radically in its policy of socialization of industry and agriculture than had originally been planned. But there was enough left of the whole Bolshevik program, and its philosophy of life—its complete nationalization of the land, and thorough liquidation of the large land owners, and the

growing threat of division and redistribution of the smaller farms; its nationalization of all church houses and church property; complete state control of the educational system; atheistic propaganda designed to root out all consciousness of God and religion from the minds and hearts of the youth of the land; the persecution of the preachers, and religious leaders—all this was so diametrically antagonistic to all that the Mennonites held sacred that compromise was impossible. Many were determined that if Bolshevism should prevail they must leave.

But where were they to go? Several countries suggested themselves. As already indicated, the Siberians inquired about the East Indies. Some thought of Mexico, but Mexico just at this time was also undergoing a revolution too much like the one in Russia to be given serious consideration. The United States, it was found prohibited the entrance of immigrants who received financial assistance from America; Canada remained, but here, too, there were difficulties. Because the Mennonites claimed and were granted military exemption during the war, the Canadian government, prompted by public opinion, had prohibited the further immigration of Mennonites and Hutterites. But the war was over now; the government remembered that the Mennonite immigrants of 1874 had proven themselves the best farmers in the entire dominion; and the Canadian Pacific Railroad still had vast stretches of sparsely settled prairie land in need of thrifty settlers.

And so, the newly formed Canadian Board of Colonization, under the presidency of David Toews, found little difficulty in securing a repeal of the Order in Council which had prohibited Mennonite immigration, as well as the order which had repealed the military exemption

decree of 1873. Seemingly it was no more difficult either to induce the Canadian Pacific Railway, which owns the finest line of ocean steamships and railroad systems in the world, to agree to transport a limited number of Mennonites to Canada on credit, with only the assurance of the Canadian Board of Colonization, CBC, that the Railway company would be finally reimbursed for their outlay, as security. One condition proved a bit troublesome later on. The Canadian government insisted upon a rigid health inspection of all proposed immigrants at some European port of departure, especially for trachoma, a prevalent eye disease among south Europeans at this time.

Only one thing more was left now to make the migration possible—the consent of the Russian government. But the Soviet authorities, not too willing to lose some of their best farmers in their attempt to revive Russian agriculture, and perhaps not too anxious to have the world know that some of their most peaceful and industrious citizens were eager to escape from the glorious possibilities of the Soviet paradise, were slow in granting the necessary passports to prospective emigrants. And furthermore, since the Canadian government had not recognized the Soviet rule, the latter refused to grant the Canadian health inspectors the right of making their inspections in Russian ports. But a way out that satisfied both Russia and Canada was eventually found. Instead of going out by the way of the Black Sea ports which would have been the logical routes to be taken by the Mennonites of south Russia, they were routed by way of Riga with the first Canadian inspection on the Latvian side of the border; emigrants once leaving Russia were not to be sent back in case they did not pass the rigid health inspection tests of the Canadian doctors. Germany, now, for whom the Russian Mennonites had always retained a warm attachment, which was also reciprocated

by Germany, and perhaps partly through the efforts of Benjamin Unruh, who in the meantime after his American tour had remained in Germany and had become the representative of both the Russian Mennonites as well as those in other parts of the world in everything that pertained to the welfare of his persecuted Russian brethren, now generously offered to provide a temporary refuge in the former military training grounds at Lechfeld, for all such Mennonite emigrants who might not be able to pass the Canadian inspection regulations, and who at the same time could not be returned to Russia. Southampton, England became another inspection port and detention camp for rejected emigrants.

Finally after two years of tedious negotiation with the government officials and colonization societies, and patient waiting on the part of anxious prospective refugees, the way was opened for the long awaited escape to a better land. Among the Russian Mennonites a leading part in the whole movement was taken by the two Agricultural societies—the *Verband der Buerger hol-laendischer Herkunft in der Ukraine*, BHH, in south Russia under the presidency of B. B. Janz; and a similar *All Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union*, the AMLV, in east Russia under the leadership of Peter Froese, and C. F. Klassen.

The first contingent of emigrants to leave Russia in the summer of 1923, came from the Chortitz colony, and consisted largely of certain liquidated owners of former large estates nearby, once well-to-do, but now without a roof over their heads, a burden to the people among whom they had found a refuge; refugees of various sorts; preachers who had been disfranchised and cruelly persecuted; victims of the civil wars, banditry and the famine; the most conscientious religiously perhaps, and the poor-

est economically.²² Two-thirds of this first group was transported to Canada on credit of the Canadian Pacific. Coming from Chortitz, this group acted somewhat independently from the BHH, which had its headquarters in the Molotschna, and which concerned itself more largely with the matter of the mass migration of all the Mennonites, rather than any individual groups. Their leader came from their own colony, a young art student and former landowner himself, who made all the arrangements, secured passports from the authorities at the unheard of price of five gold rubles per family, never again duplicated by later groups—John P. Klassen, now a professor at Bluffton College, Ohio. A large number of this group failed to pass the Canadian inspectors in Latvia, and were temporarily sent to Lechfeld. The rest all found their way to Canada during the summer.

Although the Canadian Colonization Board was unable to meet its obligations to the Canadian Pacific in 1923, yet the Railroad company agreed to an even more liberal contract for the year 1924, providing for the immigration of five thousand persons. About four thousand came this year, mostly from Molotschna colony, and other parts of the Ukraine. Some were again left at Lechfeld and Southampton.

The detention at these temporary refugee camps of those who failed to pass the health inspection often caused real hardships. Families were separated, and the victims of trachoma, and other bodily ailments, often were detained for months and perhaps years before they were considered well enough to enter Canada—all at the ex-

²² The group of sixty young men who had been refugees in Constantinople, mostly refugees from Wrangel's army, but now the special charge of the Constantinople Relief Unit, transported to the United States, first to Lancaster county, Pennsylvania in the summer of 1921, were not a part of this later migration under the Canadian Colonization Committee.

pense of the Canadian Board of Colonization. During the emigration period hundreds of unfortunates had to spend more or less time at these recuperation stations. Practically all, however, in course of time reached their objective, though some after considerable delay.

In the meantime another colonization company had been formed by a group of Mennonites around Newton, Kansas, in co-operation with certain Mexican and American land companies. This society suggested Mexico as a promising field for the Russian Mennonites. A local Kansas Mennonite periodical which advertised the Mexican proposition in glowing colors, finding its way into Russia, fell into the hands of chairman Janz of the BHH. Feeling that here perhaps might be the solution of the strict Canadian inspection regulations, and confused by the optimistic representations of the Kansas periodical, grasping at any straw that might offer the slightest hope of escape for his people, Janz in his desperation cabled the Newton society to arrange with the CPR for the transportation of ten thousand Mennonites to Mexico. What Janz did not know of course, for the moment, was that the CPR, not having a steamship line to Mexico, was not particularly interested in promoting colonization to that country. The emigration stream continued toward Canada.

In 1925 four thousand left Russia, this time from all the Mennonite settlements throughout the Soviet Republic, though most of them were again from the Ukraine. The peak was reached in 1926 with six thousand emigrants. By 1927 the movement had run its course. Less than nine hundred left that year, and only three hundred the year following. The mass migration of 1929 was directed largely to Paraguay and Brazil though some again went to Canada. The closing of the door to further emigration was not due to any lack of desire on the part

of many Mennonites to leave their native soil, nor to any lack of inducements on the part of the Canadian Pacific; for that Railroad company had renewed a contract in 1927 for the importation of twenty thousand more Mennonites if they desired to come. But the Russian government looked with disfavor upon the whole affair. Passports were becoming increasingly expensive and hard to get. They now often cost several hundred rubles per person, instead of the five rubles per family paid by the first group to leave. Family passes had not been granted since 1924.

By 1930, it was estimated that twenty-one thousand Mennonites had been transported to Canada, nearly all by the Canadian Pacific, about two-thirds of them on credit.

A Losing Struggle

Only a small portion, it is thus seen, of those desiring to emigrate, were able to do so. The rest were doomed to remain, and salvage as much as possible of their material possessions, and their religious and cultural heritage. It was a losing fight from the start. It may be well for the reader to remember here that all Russian people alike—original Russians, Germans, and Mennonites shared the harrowing experiences recorded above, and all alike were subject to the drastic Soviet program of economic socialization and religious annihilation. If Mennonites suffered more than others it was only as they were more prosperous than the latter, and more consistently and unalterably religious; and also not to be forgotten is the fact that the program of collectivization, especially of the land, was only gradually fulfilled, due largely to the reluctance of the peasants to give up possession of their small holdings. It is estimated that as late as 1928 only

a little more than two percent of the cultivated land area of Russia had been collectivized.

Land Liquidation

The large estates of Russian noblemen and Mennonite landowners, of course, were confiscated almost from the start, as well as the communal lands of the Mennonite and other German colonies. These latter were generally distributed among the poorer native peasants, often bringing into the Mennonite villages an undesirable element that later became an important factor in the liquidation of all the distinctive features of Mennonite culture from these villages. The growing food shortage and this reluctance of the peasant to give up his small tract was responsible for the famous N E P policy which tended to slow up the whole socialization process considerably. Theoretically the land belonged to the state; practically the peasant treated it as his own.

There was a continual reduction, however, by the state in the size of the individual farms, to make room for still more land hungry peasants. The former model farms of one hundred and seventy-five acres among Mennonites, were reduced at first to sixty-five acres, and finally to thirty-five. The fear of further reductions, and the claim that a farm of this size was not sufficient to support a family, together with the threat to their social and religious life resulting from the importation of the native peasants into their villages were among the important causes given by the Mennonites for their desire to emigrate.

Realizing that some sort of radical change in the whole social order was inevitable and that a certain degree of collectivization was forthcoming, the Mennonite communities hoped at first that they might retain their solid and compact community life within the bounds of

some sort of collective management. They thought they might be able to organize themselves into Mennonite co-operatives. The best known of these attempts was the founding of a series of agricultural co-operatives including all the Mennonite colonies of the Ukraine under the presidency of B. B. Janz in 1921, and with the somewhat cumbersome title *Verband der Buerger hollaendischer Herkunft in der Ukraine* already referred to as the BHH. The original purpose of this society which had been given legal status by the Soviet authorities, was to revive the agricultural prosperity of the Ukraine once more after the diastrous effects of the civil wars and famine. This mild form of co-operation, it was hoped, would satisfy the Soviet demand for collectivization. The Verband also took a leading part in the emigration movement, but finding that the government was displeased with these activities, it again gave itself over entirely to its original purpose.

But if the Mennonites thought that they might remain a collective state within a collective state and thus retain possession and control of their compact land areas to themselves, they were doomed to bitter disappointment. Due partly to the jealousy of the German section of the Soviet party, because of envy of Mennonite industry, and the latter's refusal to admit non-Mennonites to their co-operatives, the BHH was bitterly attacked by the local and metropolitan press, with the result that finally, in 1925, the Soviet government demanded such a thorough reorganization of the Verband that, if obeyed, it would entirely lose its original purpose. A little later the organization was completely liquidated.

The *All Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union*, AMLV, representing all the rest of the Mennonite settlements in the East has already been mentioned.²³ This

²³ *Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein.*

organization concerned itself largely with improving the live stock of the Mennonites, and in the selection of the best seed strains—wheat and barley, though during the emigration period the union also gave valuable assistance to that movement. In fact Peter Froese and C. F. Klassen, the leaders, represented the eastern Mennonites before the Soviet authorities in Moscow on every question that affected the latter's welfare—military exemption, emigration, and excessive taxation of churches and preachers, among others. This organization also had to cease its activities at the end of the N E P period in 1928, because, as the authorities said, it hindered the progress of collectivization among the Mennonites. With the introduction of the Five Year Plan under Stalin in 1928 all hope among the Mennonites of salvaging their economic institutions vanished forever.

Religious Freedom Restricted

One of the main objectives of the Bolshevik program was the complete destruction of the power of the established Greek Orthodox church as an institution, on the ground that the Church had always been one of the chief supporters of the old economic and social order under the Czars. One of the first official acts of the Soviet regime, in 1918, was the complete separation of church and state. The priests and other ecclesiastical officials of the hierarchy were taken off the payroll of the state, disfranchised, practically outlawed, and set adrift in the world to make a living as best they could. Soon after, the vast property holdings of the church were confiscated, the buildings nationalized, and rented back to the former owners at a high rent, and taxed heavily. Many of the churches were closed as being superfluous, and turned into anti-religious museums, social clubs or public offices. Church houses used for worship had to be registered, and

worship could not be held in a building not officially registered. Not every Mennonite village had a meeting house. It was customary frequently to hold meetings in the school houses. This now was forbidden. Sunday as a day of religious observance was abolished; it was no longer even a holiday. Church officials, priests and ministers who protested too strongly against this ruthless liquidation of church property and religious freedom were arbitrarily arrested as counter revolutionists and imprisoned, fined, exiled or shot by the thousands.

Not only the established church but religion itself as "an opiate of the people" was to be entirely rooted out of the hearts and minds of the people as rapidly as possible. And so the anti-religious crusade was not only directed against the state church, but against all the other churches as well. Mennonites shared all the persecution of the rest of the churches, and were equally subjected to the same anti-church and anti-religious legislation.

Especially vicious was the treatment accorded priests and ministers. Disfranchised and outlawed, they were denied citizenship in the new order, and as such they were not entitled to bread cards, the right to purchase goods at the Communist stores, and such other privileges as were almost absolutely essential to life during the trying times of the early years. If they had any property they were excessively taxed. Preachers could not be teachers, which was especially serious for many of the Mennonite preachers, who earned their living by teaching. They could not join the guilds and co-operatives into which finally all industry and labor was organized. These disabilities applied to their families also. In fact preachers were practically outlawed and marked for destruction, a dangerous profession in later years. Preachers and teachers were heavily represented in all the emigrations of the Mennonites during the whole period.

The churches finally were denied the right to exercise any organized charitable work, hospitals, poor relief, children's homes, insurance or any of the various philanthropic work which was such a common part of the Mennonite churches in Russia.

Realizing that the only hope of making Russia a nation of the godless would be to educate the youth in atheism, the Soviet government took over entire control of the schools, liquidated private church schools, forbade all religious instruction in the schools, and of youth under eighteen in the churches. To the Mennonites to whom religious instruction of their young people was one of their major religious concerns, this became a special ground for complaint. This refusal of the right to teach their children religion may have been one of the reasons for the increased interest during this period among the Mennonites in choral singing, which might in a way, by the use of religious chorals and others of a high moral content become a substitute among the young people for the religious instruction denied them. But in the end even attendance at these choral renditions was forbidden the young people as well as teachers in the public schools.

The whole school curriculum was changed under the new system. Instead of teaching the usual cultural subjects, teachers now were supposed to be propagandists for the new order, and agents for carrying out the agricultural and industrial program of the local Soviets. Under the influence somewhat of the educational theories of an American, John Dewey, and his group, the school became decidedly child centered. Children were given great freedom in the choice of subject matter, in the discipline of the school, and even sometimes in the choice of the teacher. Church and parents lost all control of the education of their children. Mennonite teachers in the Mennonite colonies were gradually replaced by non-Mennon-

ite atheists, especially in those former Mennonite villages where the Mennonite population had entirely disappeared or where Mennonites had lost control of their affairs through the influx of native Russians or non-Mennonite Germans. Finally, under Stalin, all teachers had to sign the atheistic questionnaires sent them. A few Mennonites signed and remained in service, but the great majority refused, and lost their jobs. That the propaganda for atheism throughout Russia is having its telling effect is evidenced by the claim made in 1932 by the president of the Union of the Militant Godless, that at that time forty percent of all the members of trade unions were godless, and that more than half of the children of the nation denied the existence of God. The percentage, among the Mennonites, let us hope is no doubt greatly below this.

Of course not all these regulations were rigidly enforced everywhere before 1928. Something was left to the local governmental authorities. In fact during the NEP period, along in 1924-25, it seemed for a time that the Mennonites might even recover a measure of their former religious freedom. What the Mennonites hoped for is perhaps well expressed in the following petition sent to Moscow on May 23, 1924, by the Commission on Church Relations.²⁴

- 1 Complete freedom of religious worship and assembly for large and small.
- 2 The unconditional right of children and young people to assemble for religious worship and instruction and choral renditions.
- 3 The establishing of Mennonite children's homes under religious training.
- 4 Repeal of the special taxes on church houses and

²⁴ The exact title of this commission is *Kommission fuer Kirchlicheangelegenheiten*, condensed alphabetically to KfK.

- preachers, and the right to erect new church buildings.
- 5 Permission to furnish the churches with a much needed supply of Bibles and other religious literature and periodicals.
 - 6 Bible training courses for the ministry.
 - 7 The schools to follow at least a neutral course, permitting neither religious nor anti-religious propaganda.²⁵
 - 8 Exemption of Mennonites from military service and military drill in lieu of some other non-combatant, constructive service; and the privilege of substituting an affirmation for the oath wherever an oath is officially required.

Even though the time seemed propitious for making them, only one of these demands was ever granted, the permission to import a certain number of Bibles.

Through the efforts of the KfK, however, permission was granted the following year to hold a session of the general *Bundes Konferenz* in Moscow, the first since the end of the war; also permission at the same time to publish a religious journal *Unser Blatt* as well as to establish a Bible school at Moscow. The Bible school never materialized, however, since it must be located in Moscow, far removed from the country communities of the Mennonites, and consequently of doubtful practical value. *Unser Blatt*, too, lasted only a few years, being forced to suspend by government order with the advent of the Stalin regime.

This general conference²⁶ called with the special con-

25 Realizing that it was impossible to get back the right to teach religion in the schools, the Mennonites hoped that at least they might keep out the direct anti-religious propaganda, and thus they might save their children for the faith in their home teaching.

26 *Allgemeine Bundes Konferenz*.

sent of the Soviet government, forced to hold its sessions in the capital city, under the direct surveillance of government representatives, the first of its kind since the close of the war, and with the exception of an All Mennonite Ukranian Mennonite Congress held the next year at Melitopol, the last general meeting of the Mennonites ever to be held in Russia, devoted its efforts largely to a discussion of the various problems then threatening the very existence of the Mennonite church, and the religious freedom of its members, such problems as were listed in the petition just mentioned; and in addition these questions—the need of religious instruction of the children in the home, the need of consecrated spiritual leadership, Christian marriage,²⁷ visiting evangelists, religious songs in worship, the cultivation of choral societies and the training of capable directors, Bible study among the membership, and the missionary enterprises of the church.

This conference marked the peak of Mennonite high hopes and expectations of ever rebuilding their spiritual life and religious institutions again. The five year plan was just in the offing.

Local Government

The Mennonites also lost political control of their local government during this period. The simple and economical rule of the village Schultz and the district Oberschultz with their few assistants was replaced by a large number of inefficient and unnecessary foreign Bolshevik henchman who had very little knowledge of the art of government, and no sympathy for the governed. Much of the detailed work of carrying out the policies

²⁷ The loose marriage and divorce laws of the Soviet regime threatened the very existence of the family—an institution held very sacred by the Mennonites.

of the central Soviet authorities at Moscow was left to the local governments. But even in the Mennonite villages where the population might still be preponderately Mennonite, the majority had little to say to such questions as were submitted to the people for decision. In the first place, more or less of foreign settlers had been introduced into the villages by the land liquidations and re-distributions. Former kulaks, preachers, teachers often, and many church leaders had been denied the right to vote, with the result that the political management of the villages often fell entirely into the hands of this foreign Bolshevik minority entirely out of sympathy with Mennonite ideals.²⁸

Military Exemption

The overthrow of the government of the Czar of course ended all the special privileges which the Mennonites had enjoyed under their rule, including exemption from military service. The Bolsheviks recognized no special privileges except for themselves. In the introduction of universal military service which was demanded early in their rule, there was no exception for Mennonites. A number of young Mennonites were drawn into the army, and might have fared badly for refusal to serve had it not been for the organized effort made in their behalf before the Moscow government just at this time of the AMLV and its leaders already mentioned several times. As a result of petitions sent to Moscow, and visits to the Soviet authorities by various pacifist organizations

²⁸ Soon after the revolution a brutal Bolshevik by the name of Bagon was placed at the head of the Molotschna settlement, with one hundred and fifty non-Mennonite assistants. where the population was still ninety-nine percent Mennonite. It was this Bolshevik official who likely during his short reign of terror was responsible for much of the suffering of the Mennonites, and he may have had something to do with the disappearance of the American relief worker, Clayton Kratz, though nothing definite is known of the fate of the latter.

among Mennonites and others, and especially the untiring efforts of the AMLV and the BHH, the Moscow government decreed on December 14, 1920,^{28a} that Mennonites might be excused from army duty in lieu of other service if their cases were favorably passed on by the local court authorities.

The application of this decree was considerably delayed by the famine; but after that the KfK assumed the role of spokesman for the young Mennonites on this question as in fact on all troublesome church questions as they related to the state. The Moscow authorities were not indisposed to grant Mennonite scruples in this matter some consideration. Especially unsatisfactory, however, to the Mennonites was the provision that individual cases must be submitted to the local courts for decision, fearing that the local authorities would be much less inclined to grant special privileges to their neighbors than would the Central authorities, far removed. For the next few years the KfK tried hard to secure certain changes in the exemption decree—to substitute the central for local authorities in passing on the validity of individual Mennonite scruples, and to change the substitute service from hospital or sanitary work to agricultural labor not directly connected with the war department. For a time, during the liberal NEP period, the Soviet government practically had agreed to the substitution of agricultural labor, though they never limited the authority of the local courts.

These rather liberal regulations for a Soviet rule

^{28a} The V B H H and the A M L V did not exist in 1920. The VBHH was chartered in 1921-1922, and the AMLV about the same time, but I think a little later. However, Froese and Klassen had been working in Moscow as representatives of the Volga and Siberia Mennonites in 1920, but not as AMLV representatives. The Tolstoy group was surely the most influential in obtaining the decree of December 14, 1920.—*Alvin J. Miller.*

were not always literally carried out by the local authorities, to whom was delegated the task of completing details of the program, and who were not in sympathy generally with such a liberal policy. Many of the young men were imprisoned in spite of the law; others were put to hard labor. It was often hard to convince the local courts that the young men were sincere and eligible to the exemption. In 1925 it was reported that in various Mennonite communities one hundred and thirty-one young men were in prison, half of whom at least were declared liable for full service. In the spring of 1926 reports from the Mennonite settlements of the Caucasus stated that twenty-two young men were shot for refusing military service; at the same time nineteen were sentenced to hard labor at Kiev, and two to prison on the same charge.

In the meantime the church itself, though not entirely united in its attitude toward this question, yet in the main decided to stand firm on the general principle of non-resistance. In the All Mennonite Congress of 1917 some of the delegates favored some sort of indirect service. In the Bundes Konferenz held the next year, which was more representative of the religious leaders of the church, it was decided that, although the Selbstschutz was a violation of the Mennonite principle of non-resistance, yet none of the participants would be disciplined for their violation. In a special meeting held, however, of the congregations in the more conservative Chortitz district in 1925, it was agreed that young men voluntarily entering active army duty would be subject to church discipline.

The young men were even more divided in their attitude on this question than the church as a whole. While most of them stood courageously for the traditional beliefs and practises, some were indifferent, finding it easier under the stress of the times to swim with the current. In fact the KfK reported that among the chief obstacles

in the way of gaining recognition from the government of their traditional peace principles, were the lukewarmness of some of the young men themselves, the example of the Selbstschutz in 1918, and the acceptance on the part of others of military drill. Since 1930 there is little evidence of any continuation of the struggle for military exemption. The KfK has practically ceased to operate, and there are no other organizations to take its place. Non-resistance as a doctrine and a practise among the Russian Mennonites is evidently doomed.

The Five Year Plan

Frequent reference has been made in the pages just preceding of the Stalin Five Year Plan, and its important bearing on the fate of the Mennonites. This plan did not introduce a new program of social theory but rather inaugurated an extensive drive to hurry to completion the original program of socialization and collectivization of all industry and agriculture, especially the latter, which, as we have seen, was given a breathing spell in the early twenties because of the opposition of the peasants. By 1928, as noted earlier, nearly ninety-eight percent of the land in Russia was still practically controlled by small independent farmers. Agriculture now as well as the remaining industry must come completely under the control of the state within five years.

Special attention in this program was directed to the *kulaks*, as the landowners of even moderate sized farms were called. A common method of separating these from their farms was to levy upon them contributions of grain or money beyond what they could produce, and then on pretence of failure to comply with the law, to confiscate their property; and if they objected, to expel them from the community, or send them into exile. At first the term *kulak* was applied only to the larger landholders, but

later it was stretched to include everybody who was in the least opposed to the collectivization program and so expressed himself—preachers, teachers, or landless.

The selection of the kulaks to be expelled was left largely to the local village authorities; and since in the Mennonite villages the control had been seized by non-Mennonite communists, it was evident that the number of kulaks among the industrious Mennonite farmers, and devoted preachers and teachers would be unusually large. In the village of Chortitz, in May of 1931, a meeting was called to vote out the remaining kulaks in the village. The communist contingent of the village, with a minority of the population, but claiming two-thirds of the votes cast, voted to expel the remaining nine once prosperous Mennonite farmers. Hundreds of thousands all over Russia and hundreds, and perhaps thousands of Mennonites were classed as kulaks, arrested and imprisoned, expelled from their homes on short notice to eke out an existence as best they could; or exiled to the forests of the far north or the vast wastes of Siberia, condemned to hard labor, gathering woodpulp for export, building a new Siberian railroad, or digging in the mines. They were sent from southern concentration camps by the freight train loads, sometimes whole families, often men torn from their families on a few days' notice frequently, with insufficient food or clothing, little provision for either health or comfort. Many died of starvation, disease or exposure. Liquidation of the kulaks became a major sport among the Soviet authorities.

Religious liberty also was further restricted. All the former anti-religious regulations were rigidly enforced. More churches were closed. Sunday had been abolished not only as a day of worship but as a holiday. Religious instruction of youth was prohibited. Such preachers as had not already emigrated had been sent

into exile; and newly elected ones hesitated to accept the dangerous obligation. Through it all the Bolsheviks boasted that they guaranteed freedom of worship. What is the use of freedom of worship, the Mennonites replied, if we have neither preachers nor church houses. Only the landless and the godless by this time had no fault to find with Five Year Plan.

The Moscow Flight

It is not surprising then that many Mennonites under these conditions, those who suffered most and those who were most concerned for the religious fate of their children and themselves, should grasp any straw that promised the least bit of hope of escape from this unbearable situation. But there seemed little hope; the Soviet government had practically ceased giving passports, without which emigration was impossible. But just at this time a group of some seventy Mennonites from Siberia, which was again suffering famine conditions as a result of dry weather and heavy governmental requisitions, had fled to Moscow, blindly trusting that somehow they might find in the capital city the relief denied them at home. Strangely enough, and quite unexpectedly, perhaps, because of their very audacity and persistency, the Soviet authorities granted them passports with permission to leave the country.

This news, brought back to the home communities in Siberia, spread like wildfire among the Mennonites and other German colonists. Quietly so as not to arouse too much suspicion, many Mennonites now began to dispose of their personal possessions so as to get enough money to take them to Moscow and purchase passports, hoping that somehow the American and Dutch brethren might provide for their transportation needs beyond that. Some in their hurry to get away did not even sell all their

personal property, leaving their furniture in their homes, and turning their cattle out into the meadows. A mass movement on a somewhat smaller scale was also set in motion among the Mennonites in the Ukraine.

Before the Moscow government knew what was happening about a thousand Mennonite families, mostly from Siberia and some hundreds of Lutherans and some Catholics, had gathered together in the cheap lodging houses and temporary huts on the outskirts of the city, hoping that they, too, might find some way of escape to the new world. The first reports in the papers spoke of six thousand refugees, later, of ten thousand and finally, of thirteen thousand.

This dramatic attempt of citizens of the Soviet Republic, which still boasted that it was the freest country in the world, and just at a time when the economic conditions and general dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime had reached a critical period, was given wide publicity in the world press. To the Russian government it was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. Steps were immediately taken to stem the tide. Government agents were sent into the Mennonite settlements to discourage the mass movement, Ticket agents were forbidden to sell tickets to Moscow.

At the same time, those in Moscow were requested to return to their homes. Requested, besides, to sign a statement that they were leaving of their own free will. Those refusing to sign were packed into crowded musty rooms, and the heat turned on until the unlucky victims were glad to sign anything if only to relieve them from this torture. Police brutally rounded up unwilling refugees, herded them together into freight cars and shipped them, like so many cattle, to far off Siberia or south Russia, without regard to food, clothing or ordinary sanitary precautions. Families were separated in the hurry

of the loading, some going to one settlement, and other members to another sometimes far removed. The cars were closed, and stops made only at long intervals. Many of the passengers were sick from exposure and neglect. Children were born all along the way; sometimes mother and child, both without proper medical care, died. The dead, and sometimes the sick, were unloaded at the first station, and thrown out to be disposed of by the local inhabitants. When these refugees, such as survived, did get back home finally they found themselves worse off than before they left some months before. They were without household furniture, farm equipment or live stock. Many found their homes had been occupied by strangers. Life was harder than ever, and it was only with the help of their friends and neighbors that they could start again at all. About one-half of the Moscow refugees were thus sent back to their former home settlements.

The plight, too, of those remaining at Moscow was becoming increasingly desperate. Their funds, after months of patient waiting, were running low, and they were still not in sight of either the necessary passports or the help from abroad which would transport them to Canada. But the whole world had by this time become interested in the fate of this group of pious people seeking to escape religious persecution under the Red terror. Germany especially, regarding these German speaking Mennonites and Lutherans as being more German than Russian was very sympathetic toward them. The German Cabinet on November 19, 1929, decided to intercede in behalf of the refugees with the Russian government; and the Reichstag voted a substantial sum of money to aid an emigration project, and offered a temporary stopping place in Germany for the refugees until they could find a permanent home perhaps somewhere in America. The

German Red Cross, too, as well as other philanthropic organizations interested themselves in the project. President Hindenburg donated two hundred thousand marks out of his own private fortune to the cause. Even the League of Nations gave the matter some attention, though no material assistance. It was due no doubt largely to the intercession of the German government that some six thousand of these refugees, about four thousand of whom were Mennonites, came to Germany to await there their further disposition.

Of course the Mennonites of Germany took a keen interest in this whole movement. Through the efforts of Benjamin Unruh, who had already so effectively represented the foreign Mennonites in the earlier emigration, ably assisted by E. Haendiges, editor of the *Mennotische Blaetter*, which gave the whole matter wide publicity, and Christian Neff of south Germany, an effective relief work was organized, which furnished the destitute strangers from Russia much needed clothing, food, and medical care, as well as spiritual comfort in the three former military barracks in north Germany, which the German government so generously offered as a temporary resting place for the exiles.

The Mennonites in other parts of the world, too, felt a deep concern for the fate of their Russian brethren. The question was not solved permanently when the German government offered the Russians a temporary resting place. Germany itself was too hard pressed to furnish them a satisfactory permanent home. The question still remaining for those concerned with a permanent solution was what was to be their final destination. For the purpose of discussing this, as well as a number of other questions still confronting the various Mennonite relief organizations of the world, Professor Unruh called an All



Delegates to the Mennonite World Relief Congress, Danzig, 1930

Standing—Left to right—Dr. Kundt (German Foreign Office); Benjamin H. Unruh (Karlsruhe Germany); David Toews (Canada); O. O. Miller (USA); C. K. Klassen (Canada); Ds S. H. N. Gorter (Netherlands); H. S. Bender (USA).
Seated: Pastor Chr. Neff (Germany); Dr. Straube (German Government Representative)

Mennonite Congress representing all of these organizations to meet in Danzig in the Spring of 1930. Delegates were present from all the large Mennonite settlements except Russia. The MCC of the United States, delegated Professor Harold S. Bender, then a student at Heidelberg, to represent them; David Toews, and C. F. Klassen, the latter as already seen, former Vice President of the AMLV in Russia, but now a resident of Canada, spoke for the Canadian Mennonites; Pastor S. H. N. Gorter of Rotterdam, now head of the Dutch relief work, represented the Mennonites of Holland; Benjamin Unruh, E. Haendiges of Elbing, Christian Neff, A. P. Fast of Berlin, a Russian refugee, appeared for Germany; Russia was not represented by any delegates from Russia, though the case for the Mennonites still left in Russia as well as the Russian emigrants in various parts of the world, was ably represented by recent Russian refugees among several of the delegations from Canada, Germany and Holland.

The whole field of Mennonite colonization and relief the world over was discussed at this conference—the status of the Canadian Mennonites who had recently gone to Mexico and Paraguay; the refugees still marooned at Harbin, China; the prospects of further migration from Russia, the problem of continued help for the twenty thousand Russian Mennonites who were still in need in Canada; as well as the main objective of the Congress, the disposition of four thousand Mennonites still guests of the German government.

Emigration to the United States was still out of the question, and was not considered by the delegates. By this time, too, largely because of an economic depression, the door had been practically closed to Canada, except for a limited number of immigrants who might have close relatives in Canada, who would assume complete re-

sponsibility for the support of the newcomers. Mexico was not considered.

Only South America remained as a possibility. The German government favored Santa Catharina Province in Brazil, because of the large German settlement already located there. The Hanseatic Corporation with large land holdings in the region, warmly seconded the choice. The government generously offered to advance the transportation costs and enough money for the first year's support to all those desiring to migrate to Brazil. There was one objection to the Brazilian adventure presenting itself to such of the Mennonites as may have had conscientious scruples against military service—Brazil did not guarantee exemption from military service to prospective Mennonite settlers as Paraguay had done. About one thousand took advantage of the German government offer; and since these knew that they would not enjoy exemption from war service it is reasonable to conclude that those making this choice were not among the most scrupulous on this question. At the time of the Amsterdam Congress in 1936 a large part of this debt to the German government was still due. The Dutch Mennonites have taken a special interest in the Brazilian Mennonites as their special field of Mennonite relief work. They furnished money for the purchase of live stock at the start, and later money for the establishing of schools.

The American Mennonites favored Paraguay as a possible home for the refugees, partly because a few years before a Canadian colony had already been established there in the Gran Chaco, and especially because of the liberal terms offered by the Paraguayan government, including exemption from military service, and a large degree of local autonomy in matters of education and language. About two thousand colonists, including several hundred a few years later from Harbin, China, were

located near the Canadian settlement, largely financed by the American Mennonites.²⁹

Perhaps about one thousand of these Moscow refugees, temporary guests of Germany, found their way to Canada, and a small number remained in Germany.

The Harbin Refugees

In the meantime some of the Siberians had sought escape by way of the Pacific instead of the Atlantic. In the early twenties a number of the victims of the famine in western Siberia, in the hope that they might better their condition in the east, started a new settlement along the Amur river in the far east. But they were doomed to disappointment, and under the Stalin regime some of them crossed the Amur into China, and now about one thousand, including a number of Lutherans and a few Catholics, were marooned at Harbin, China, hoping that they, too, might find their way to the promised land of Canada. Without food or clothing, and no money, outlawed by the Russians and not altogether welcomed by the Chinese, their plight was desperate, and they were able to exist only by the friendly assistance of the German contingent of the city's population.

But these found entrance into Canada even more difficult than did their fellow refugees from Moscow. In addition to all the other handicaps was this one, that they had no passports, and Canada had decided, in 1927, that she would accept no immigrants without passports. At this point the German government through the efforts of Benjamin Unruh again, and the German consul at Har-

²⁹ The interest of the Paraguayan government is shown by the appearance of the President in person to welcome the first party of Mennonites as they crossed the border into the country. At this time it was thought by the Paraguayans that the emigration would be much larger than it actually turned out later. The Newspapers frequently spoke of a mass migration of one hundred thousand, the entire Russian Mennonite population.

bin, came to the rescue of these Russian Germans, promising to furnish them with passports, and assuming all the obligations involved in such guarantee. But as already seen, Canada by this time was not open to further mass immigration under any circumstances.

Through the sympathetic efforts of the American consul at Harbin, two hundred were permitted under the quota system, to come to the United States, aided of course by the American Mennonites. These arrived in the spring of 1930, and were helped to a new start in life in Washington and California by their American brethren. It was not until several years later that the rest were able to leave China. The Nansen International Office for Refugees under the sponsorship of the League of Nations finally interested itself in their behalf, and it was under the auspices of this organization that, in 1932, three hundred and seventy-three Mennonites found their way to Paraguay, and three hundred and ninety-seven Lutherans to Brazil. Two years later one hundred and eighty Mennonites, and one hundred Lutherans and Catholics were located in Brazil.

Incidentally the intervention of the League of Nations in behalf of the Mennonite emigration to Paraguay raised a question of considerable international significance. In the meeting of the Council of the League in September 1931, the Chinese delegate called attention to the plight of the Harbin refugees, requesting that the League help them to find a permanent home. The delegate from Paraguay generously offered them a home in the Chaco in Paraguay if their transportation expenses could be guaranteed. The German delegate, Count Bernstorff, remembered as the pre-war ambassador to the United States, whose government was already greatly interested in the whole question, thereupon thanked the Paraguayan delegate for the generous offer.

The Chaco, it will be remembered, was a subject of bitter dispute just at this time between Paraguay and Bolivia. The latter, fearing that the recognition of Paraguayan sovereignty over the Chaco by the League, would weaken her own claim to the disputed territory, protested, and at the next meeting of the Council, the Bolivian delegate warned that body that such recognition without at the same time recognizing the claims of Bolivia might lead to grave consequences.

It is entirely possible that the coming of these peace loving Mennonites, who abhorred all war and came here to escape the ravages of war, by their settling of this hitherto uninhabited and waste land, making it fruitful, may have been a contributing cause of the savage and futile war which followed between Paraguay and Bolivia. The barren wastes of the Chaco were not worth fighting over until it appeared that a large body of thrifty German Mennonites might settle there, which gave the region prospective value.

And so, after twenty years of civil war, anarchy, economic annihilation, famine, imprisonment, rape and murder, and religious persecution unparalleled in modern history, some twenty-eight thousand discouraged Russian Mennonites, about one-fourth of the entire Mennonite population escaped the terrors of their once generous native land, to start life all over again, as their forbears had repeatedly done before them, on what was left of the bleak and undesirable frontier lands of the new world. But about three-fourths of their brethren had to remain in Russia doomed to further economic hardships, and perhaps complete religious annihilation.

Lack of News

Very little news has reached America in recent years from the Mennonites who have remained in Russia. Even

such letters as they have written to their American relatives have been guarded in what they say about the true conditions, for fear that if they were discovered telling the full truth they would be subjected to further persecution by the Soviet authorities. In fact it has been the general request of the Russian Mennonites themselves that their friends and relatives from the outside world write them only sparingly, since even the receipt of foreign mail placed them under suspicion. And so we have little information about the fate of the Mennonites still under Soviet rule.

From the following description, however, written in 1938, by a German Mennonite who had returned to his native home after several years among the Mennonites in the Molotschna colony we get a glimpse of what has been happening to one of the most prosperous of the Mennonite villages—Ohrloff.³⁰ This case is typical, no doubt, of the fate of most of the Mennonite settlements throughout southern Russia.

Speaking of the expropriation of Mennonite homes by the incoming Russians in the village, this writer continues,—

“The homestead in which the Johan Warkentin family formerly lived has been completely torn down. The village council sold the farm buildings to a group of Russians who removed the material to another new Russian village which they established between the colonies of Blumenstein and Ohrloff. This Russian village consists of twenty-seven homesteads; and a number of Mennonite farm buildings have been removed to the new location. The home of J. Toews and Wiebe has been transformed into a veteran’s hospital, which now has one hundred and seventy-five patients. Eight old women are still given a home in the *Grosze Stube* of this former homestead, left over from the German Old People’s Home between Rosenort and Tigen-

30 Heinrich Hayo Schroeder, in *Mennonitische Warte*, March, 1938.

weide. These veteran hospital inmates are supported by the city of Melitopol, and are a degenerate lot, a great moral menace to the entire village."

"The former home of Cornies on the Wiebe homestead is still standing, but the stable and barn have been torn down. The former home of P. Hiebert is now occupied by the aged Poplavski, Schroeder's former coachman. He lives there with his son Chediwir; they bought only the dwelling house and the garden, the stable being occupied by the village Collective, and used for stabling the Collective cows. The barn has been completely removed. Peter Unruh's home is occupied by two families from White Russia, and two German families from Volhynia. The barn and summer house have been removed. These four families are confined to five rooms. Two Ukrainian families from the province of Tschernigovskaja are living in P. Regier's homestead. The barn and stable here, too, have been taken away; the widow Mora has moved into the summer house."

"Bartel's homestead thus far has not been disturbed. The dwelling house is occupied by two Russian families. The *Sommerstube* serves as the living quarters for a German family from Volhynia, while the summer house is used as a garbage dump for the Collective, and the barn as a stable for the young cattle of the Collective. The aged Bartel had escaped to Memrik but has since died. The homestead of Gerhard Dueck is occupied by three families from Volhynia. The barn has been torn down, and the stable turned into a blacksmith shop. Heinrich Enns' barn and stable have been removed, while one German and three Russian families are living in the house."

"Three Russian families are living in Dirksen's home where the barn has been torn down, and the stable has been converted into a Collective hog barn. The summer house is now the Collective electric station. Every home is equipped with electric lights, but the lights are seldom turned on because of a lack of fuel for power; and so, because of this shortage they sit in the dark much of the time. Before the war all the homes were brilliantly lighted and there was never any shortage of fuel. Catherine Enns' home has been turned into a Veterinary hospital. The Ediger house is now occupied by four teacher families. Ediger himself was exiled for six years to Tomsk."

"The large Reimer estate has been almost completely destroyed. Only the building in which the small general store was housed is still standing, and this has been converted into a Red club house. The homestead on which before the war the electric station was located has also been destroyed; only the dwelling house remains now occupied by two Russian families. Two Russian families have also moved in with A. Fast. The Brauel teachers home now houses four teachers families. Guenther's homestead has been almost completely destroyed, only the house along the street remains, serving now as the headquarters for the "*Agro-nomen*." Wiebe's silk house, too, has been turned into an agricultural school, while the stable serves as the living quarters for a Russian family."

"And so, this is the picture along one side of the street from Ohrloff to the village limits of Tiege. Let us take a look at the other side."

"The hospital is still open. When I left there were two doctors in charge. The head physician was a Russian and a pretty good sort of fellow; the assistant is a German. I have learned since, however, that the Russian has been transferred to the Halbstadt-Montau hospital because the Montau doctors have all been arrested by the Soviet authorities. Between the hospital and the post office stood the former home of Blum, now occupied by a Polak. Goosen's homestead is occupied by three families from Volhynia. The playground of the Central school, where in 1918 the Ludendorff celebration was held, is now covered by three Russian huts. This Central school has been expanded into a ten grade school, which in 1937 had four hundred pupils with fifteen teachers, thirteen German, and two Ukrainian. After I left, I heard that the school had been closed because the fifteen teachers had all been arrested. The church and Schroeder's homestead have been converted into a children's home, containing at present one hundred and seventy-five children, mostly cripples, some without legs, others with one leg, crawling about as if on all fours. One sees all sorts of human derelicts here, in all, a pitiable band."

"Three Russian families are settled in C. Warkentin's homestead, while a kindergarten has been established at D. Goerzen's. Two Russian families have moved into the dwelling house, while J. Siemens occupies the summer

house; barns and stable have all been removed. Jansen's home had been transformed into a horse farm with fifty-seven horses. The barn serves as a Collective straw shed. The dwelling house is occupied by one Russian and two Volhynian families. The school house has been converted into a Red headquarters. Cornelius Berg also has two Volhynian families. A Prussian family lives in the home of N. Warkentin, and also the family S, a former night watchman. On William Neufeld's homestead the stable and barn have been destroyed, while a Russian family lives in the summer house, and one from Volhynia in the dwelling house. Five families from Volhynia occupy the Martin home. D. Klassen's home has been completely destroyed." "This gives you a picture of the once beautiful and prosperous Ohrloff. And it is the same in all the other colonies. Most of the former occupants have been arrested or driven out. Many have died in exile. The Ohrloff cemetery, too, has been shamefully despoiled. The stones and monuments have been torn down and sent to Halbstadt to be used for stone steps. The iron fences about the graves have been taken to Halbstadt also, to serve the "Party members" as street fences. The Reds have broken into the vault of Heinrich Reimer, and torn open the coffin. The vaults of Johan Cornies and Philip Wiebe have also been demolished. Human skulls and skeletons are scattered all about the cemetery. When I left there was only one tombstone left, that of Mrs. Reimer's, and even that was mutilated, and the vault ransacked. The lovely evergreen trees throughout the cemetery have all been cut down and used for fuel." "And so it is through all the colonies. There are very few Germans left. Many were shot; numbers were exiled for from ten to twenty-five years, into the far north, some even to the island of Nova Zembla."

If the fate of Ohrloff is typical of that of the other Russian Mennonite villages, as likely it is, it is quite evident that Mennonitism in Russia faces a long and bitter struggle if not in fact practical annihilation.

AMERICA

IX

FIRST SETTLEMENTS

NEW YORK

The first Mennonites to come to America were stray Dutch traders and colonists who accompanied their fellow countrymen from Holland to their possessions in the new world in the early days when New York was still New Netherlands. The term Anabaptist, undoubtedly Mennonite, is frequently found in the early colonial records of New Netherlands. The term Mennonite itself is found first in a report of the religious conditions in the first Dutch settlement made in the new world found in the writings of a French Jesuit traveler, Father Jogues. In a letter dated 1643, describing the *Manhate* settlement he enumerates among the religious groups--"Calvinists, Catholics, English Puritans, Lutherans and Anabaptists here called *Menists*." In a later document, of 1657, *Mennonists* are reported at Gravesend, Long Island. Beyond these bare items, however, nothing is known concerning these first comers of the Mennonite faith.

A few years later, in 1663, we glean a few more scraps of information regarding a third Dutch Mennonite colony led by the social reformer Cornelis Pieter Plockhoy of Zeirik Zee. This colony, however, as already noted in an earlier chapter, after a precarious existence of scarcely a year, was completely destroyed by an English marauding expedition along the shores of the present state of Delaware during the war between England and Holland in 1664.

GERMANTOWN

The first permanent Mennonite colony in America was that established at Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683, by a group of Germans of Dutch ancestry from the town of Crefeld, and surrounding region along the lower Rhine near the Dutch border. This colony owed its existence to two forces—religious intolerance, and Quaker missionary zeal.

Mennonites at the close of the seventeenth century had not yet secured entire religious liberty. The day of the stake and the rack, to be sure, were past; but even in Crefeld, which was one of the most liberal of German cities toward religious dissenters, they were still compelled, as noted in an earlier chapter, to erect their house of worship in a back alley in order that they might not attract public attention. Active propaganda was forbidden. Special taxes were levied against them. Frequently they were subjected to extortion at the hands of petty, but greedy lords upon whose estates they lived. The Quakers especially, of whom there were now several congregations in the cities along the lower Rhine, were abused because of their aggressive efforts in extending their faith.

It will be remembered that between 1655 and 1680 a number of Quakers from England, including both Fox and Penn, had visited northwest Germany and Netherlands repeatedly in the interest of their cause. These were especially well received by the Mennonites, among whom they gained a number of Quaker converts in many of the Mennonite centers along the Rhine, including Crefeld and Kriegsheim, the two regions from which the first Mennonites and Mennonite-Quakers migrated to

Pennsylvania.¹ It was to these Mennonite-Quakers and their Mennonite friends and relatives that Penn first made his appeal for German immigrants to his newly inherited colony of Pennsylvania. In 1682, Jacob Telner, a Mennonite merchant of Amsterdam, who had visited New York several times, and who was acquainted with the London Quakers, together with five other Mennonites and Quakers from Crefeld and surrounding towns, purchased eighteen thousand acres of land in Pennsylvania for the purpose of founding a colony. About the same time, too, a group of Pietists from Frankfort on the Main, under the leadership of Francis Daniel Pastorius, established the Frankfort Land Company which purchased forty thousand acres north and west of Philadelphia. It was from these two groups that the actual settlers purchased most of their land.

Soon after, on October 6, 1683, a group of thirteen families, one Mennonite and twelve Mennonite-Quakers, from Crefeld and the surrounding region, all with Dutch names, some well-known in early Mennonite history, arrived at Philadelphia on board the ship Concord. They immediately proceeded north several miles to a place selected for them by Pastorius, who had preceded them by several months, and founded Germantown, not only the first permanent Mennonite, but the first German colony in America.

Francis Daniel Pastorius, the Pietist, not a Mennonite, the agent of the Frankfort Land Company, became the chief historian of the colony; but his role as founder of Germantown has perhaps been overemphasized. As representative of the Frankfort Land Company he served his company well, and disposed of much of their land

¹ By Mennonite-Quakers we mean German Quakers who had been Mennonites originally but had been converted to Quakerism by Quaker missionaries in Germany before they came to America.

from time to time. But he had no hand in the organizing of the Crefeld group, and there is no evidence that he had any part in the European movement which led to the actual settlement of Germantown by the Mennonites and the Mennonite-Quakers. He served the colony well, however, in many capacities in course of time, primarily as legal adviser, scrivener, as the first magistrate, and finally for many years as school teacher. Being the author of many letters and treatises in which he does not hesitate to speak freely of his own activities it is only natural that in the absence of other literary remains of the group, the figure of Pastorius should loom larger in the history of the settlement than his real importance would warrant. Might he not more appropriately be called the historian rather than the founder of Germantown.

These first Mennonite and Quaker colonists were mostly mechanics and linen weavers, unlike later Mennonites who came to America "not given much to agriculture." They founded a village, cultivated the soil on a small scale at first, but soon turned to weaving as their chief industry. Although they passed through a brief period of hardships, they were free from Indian dangers and disease epidemics, fatal to so many colonial experiments. Soon other settlers followed these first thirteen families, many of whom located on the lands about the village. By 1700 the following family names, including the first comers, appear in the the early records—*Op den Graf, Lensen, Streypers, Lucken, van Bebber, Jansen, Schumacher, Kassel, Keyser, Rittinghuysen, Kunderts, Tyson, Siemens, Keurlis, Bleikers, Tunes, van Sinteren, Neus, Engel, Schlegel, Graff, etc.*

Mennonite immigrants to Germantown were not numerous. In all there were perhaps not more than fifty families. Later many more of course located farther west at Skippack and Pequea. After 1700, however, German-

town became the nucleus of a large settlement of non-Mennonites. Especially attractive was the colony for numerous German sects and religious denominations. In Germantown were organized not only the first Mennonite, and the first and perhaps only German Quaker congregation in America, but also the first Dunkard, the first German Reformed, German Lutheran, German Moravian, to say nothing of a number of sects never heard of before this side of the Atlantic.

Soon after 1702 the available land about Germantown had largely been taken up, which necessitated the establishing of a second Mennonite colony along the Skip-pack creek, a tributary of the Perkiomen, about thirty miles above Germantown. This new settlement, begun by a Germantown colonist and several of his fellow immigrants a little later, became the center of a flourishing colony of Palatine Mennonites.

In Germantown, the few Mennonites at first met with the Quakers in common worship, but as new immigrants came and as they represented different denominations, the religious groups began to separate for worship. By 1690, the Mennonites, although they were without a minister, met in a private house for religious instruction consisting of reading by one of their number from a book of sermons. William Rittenhouse, who arrived in 1688, was soon after, in 1690, elected as their first minister. In 1708 the first log meeting house was erected on the site occupied by the present structure on Germantown avenue. The Mennonite group among the colonists did not grow rapidly, Germantown being passed by for the newer colonies farther west. By 1712 there was a membership in the two congregations of Germantown and Skippack of ninety-nine, embracing in all, perhaps, a Mennonite population of about two hundred.

The First Petition Against Slavery

These Germantown Mennonites and Mennonite-Quakers not only formed the advance guard of the German immigration to America, but they were pioneers in other important respects also. In 1688 they issued the first public protest against slavery on record in America, although the institution had also been forbidden in the Plockhoy colony in 1663. To the German Mennonites the holding of slaves ran counter to both their racial ideals and their religious convictions. The English Quakers still held slaves. It was for the purpose of showing their disapproval of the practise as well as for the purpose of fostering German immigration that a group of four men in the year mentioned—Pastorious, Lutheran Pietist, Gerrit Hendricks, Mennonite, Derick Op den Graff, Mennonite-Quaker, and Abraham his brother, first Mennonite, but later Quaker and finally free lance, sent a memorial to the Quaker Monthly Meeting protesting against the holding of slaves.

"Those who hold slaves are no better than Turks," the protest declares, "for we have heard that ye most part of such Negers are brought hither against their will and consent, and that many of them are stolen." The institution was also cited in Germany evidently as an argument against further emigration. "For", the protest continues, "this makes an ill report in all those countries of Europe where they hear off, that ye Quackers do here handel men, like they handel there ye cattle and for that reason have no mind or inclination to come hither."

The English Quakers were not ready yet, however, to champion the cause of absolute freedom. The Monthly Meeting, deciding the matter too weighty for their consideration referred it to the Quarterly Meeting, which in turn avoided the subject by passing it on to the Annual Meeting where no further action was taken on the matter.

An Early Political Experiment

The Germantown colony also furnishes us an interesting example of an early Mennonite political experiment. In 1691 the village was incorporated under the laws of the Province, receiving a special charter. The form of government provided for in this first Pennsylvania borough was that of a closed corporation, the corporate members being granted the exclusive right of the franchise, of legislation, and of admitting new members into the corporation. The first corporate members were mostly Mennonites and Mennonite-Quakers, who maintained control of the village government long after they were outnumbered by residents who did not share their religious views, nor their scruples against the use of force in maintaining order. So long as village ordinances and local litigation concerned itself only with stray pigs and line fences there was little difficulty in securing Mennonite officials, but with the building of a jail and the introduction of stocks and the whipping post, they lost their desire for office. As early as 1701 Pastorius complained to Penn that he found it increasingly difficult to find men who would serve in the General Court for "conscience sake," and hoped for relief from the arrival of new immigrants. Several men declined to accept offices to which they had been elected. Finally in 1707, the village lost its charter, and it was merged for political purposes with the township of which it was a part. The Mennonites refused to hold office; but with the Mennonite-Quakers who had not yet lost their former Mennonite prejudice against office holding, they at the same time retained control of the franchise. For this reason we have here the unparalleled instance of a corporation losing its charter because no one could be found who was willing to hold the offices.

Later History

The remaining history of the Germantown church can be dismissed with a few words. Later immigrants as we saw passed it by for more favorable lands elsewhere. In 1770 the old log building was replaced by the little stone structure, still standing. At that time the congregation numbered only twenty-five. It finally became extinct, but was again revived in 1863, under the pastorate of F. R. S. Hunsicker. At present it has a membership of thirty-one, and is affiliated with the General Conference branch of the church. Insignificant as its later history may have been, however, yet the Germantown settlement exerted no mean influence upon the church at large, and indirectly upon the civil and religious history of Philadelphia and the state of Pennsylvania. In the house of van Bebber was held, in 1690, the first service of the German Lutheran church in America, and according to Rev. N. B. Grubb at least ten of the present churches of Philadelphia including one Evangelical, two Episcopal, one Presbyterian, were all first organized in the little Mennonite meeting house. Many of these also drew heavily upon the Mennonites for their membership.

Prominent Names

In the list of names prominent in the industrial and political life of Pennsylvania can be found many of the descendants of the first Mennonite settlers. In 1690 William Rittenhouse built on the Wissahicon, now a part of Fairmount Park, the first paper mill in America. His great-grandson, David Rittenhouse, born in 1732, became a celebrated astronomer of his day, and an intimate friend of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. He became a prominent member of the Assembly during the Revolu-

tionary war and was appointed first director of the United States Mint by George Washington. Among other prominent descendants of the first Mennonites was the late Governor Samuel Pennypacker, who in addition to his political activities did much to create an interest not only in Mennonite history but also in that of all Pennsylvania Germans; and all the other prominent Pennypackers of the country; Samuel Cunard, founder of the well known English Cunard steamship line; and William C. Gorgas, who by discovering the yellow fever mosquito eliminated one of the most dreaded scourges of the land, and made the building of the Panama Canal possible.²

SWISS-GERMAN PALATINES

These early Germantown Mennonites, coming largely from northwestern Germany, and for the most part of Dutch stock, constituted but the advance guard of the steady stream of Mennonite immigration which found its way into Pennsylvania throughout the first half of the century. After 1700 few came from this part of Germany. A much larger migration was that of the Swiss-Germans from the Palatinate. Although we are primarily concerned here only with the Mennonites, it must be remembered that during this period tens of thousands of Palatines of every faith known in Germany—Lutherans, Reformed, Catholics, Dunkards, Schwenkfelders, Moravians, and Mystics, as well as Mennonites settled in southeastern Pennsylvania to form the basis of that picturesque element of the Quaker state population commonly known as the Pennsylvania Dutch.

² Surgeon General William Crawford Gorgas was the direct descendant of both John Gorgas, a charter member of the Germantown Mennonite church, as well as of William Rittenhouse, the first Mennonite minister in the Germantown congregation and in America.

The cause of this immigrant tide was mainly economic pressure, although in the case of some, religious oppression was a contributing factor. During the early eighteenth century there was great poverty and distress throughout the Palatinate. During the war of the Palatinate (1688-1697) the French armies completely devastated the country. Several severe winters soon after, and famine added to the distress. Just at this time, too, came an urgent invitation, widely published, from Queen Anne of England to settle in the American colonies. The climax of distress seems to have been reached in the year 1709, for in that year a sudden emigration fever seems to have seized the Palatines. Some eight or ten thousand during the year poured into England, hoping to be transported to America. The English Government, surprised at this sudden inundation of Germans, was hardly prepared to care for them. Most of them were induced to return to Germany; some were settled in Ireland. About six hundred were transported to the Carolinas where Graffenried had already established a Swiss colony at New Bern. The next year a number were sent to New York. Only a few families found their way in this year to Pennsylvania. The next year, however, and the years following the latter state became the chief objective of the movement. The Mennonites who formed only a small part of this tide had added reason for leaving the Palatinate. While the larger portion of the settlers were Germans, the Mennonites were Swiss exiles who had been forced to find temporary homes in the Palatinate in 1671 and the years following. These were still living under annoying and oppressive religious restrictions.

Along the Skippack

The first Mennonite Palatine immigrants joined some Germantown colonists in founding the Skippack settle-

ment on a tract of land bought by Matthias van Bebber in the year 1702, in what is now Perkiomen township, in Montgomery county. Before 1709, however, there were only a few scattered families. According to William Penn, in that year six Palatine Mennonite families left London for Pennsylvania, but where they settled is uncertain, undoubtedly along the Skippack, however. This initial colony expanded during the next fifty years by natural increase and by additions from Germany until it formed a Mennonite community on both sides of the Skippack creek ten miles wide extending north through the north central part of Montgomery county, the western part of Bucks county, a small section of eastern Berks and Lehigh counties, southern Northampton, and included also a few scattered settlements in Chester county. By the time of the Revolutionary war, among perhaps others, the following congregations were already well established in this area—Skippack, Deep Run, Franconia, Salford, Swamp, Plain, Methacton, Schuylkill, Hereford, Springfield, Rockhill, Blooming Glen, Coventry, Upper Milford, Saucon, Siegfried, etc.

Among the prevailing Mennonite family names in their modern spelling are the following: *Funk, Stauffer, Gottschall, Ziegler, Clemmer or Clymer, Roth, Bechtel, Boyer, Moyer, Bergey, Detweiler, Huffman, Gehman, Bauman, Kolb, Pennypacker, Frey, Showalter, Kratz, Oberholtzer, Longenecker, Yoder, Hunsicker, Alderfer, Wambold, Haldeman, Fretz, High, Geisinger, Geil, Benner, Hiestand, Souder, Allebach, Beidler, etc.*

An early Mennonite Palatine settlement was made in the Watauga valley in North Carolina which was still in existence in 1773, but of which little is known since. This was likely a daughter colony of the Pennsylvania and Virginia settlements.

The Pequea Colony

By far the largest and most important of the early Palatine colonies, however, was the one established by the Swiss Palatine Mennonites on the Pequea creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna in what is now Lancaster county. These pioneers who founded the first white settlement in the region of the fertile Susquehanna were mostly of such Swiss as had been driven into the Palatinate in 1671 and the years following. The Swiss exiles of 1709 and 1710 were not among the earliest comers, although later many of these found their way into Pennsylvania also.

This pioneer group consisted of ten men, "Switzers, lately arrived in the Province" to whom Penn gave in 1710 a warrant for ten thousand acres of land situated "on the northwesterly side of a hill twenty miles easterly from Conestoga near the head of the "Perquin creek."³ pounds sterling money, and one shilling quitrent annually for every hundred acres. The region was "a rich lime stone country, beautifully adorned with sugar maple, hickory, and black and white walnut on the border of a delightful stream abounding in the finest trout."

The first settlers were evidently well pleased with their surroundings, for early the next spring (1711) they sent one of their number, Martin Kendig, back to the Palatinate to urge their poverty-stricken and oppressed friends and relatives to join them in their new home. Kendig returned the same year with a number of new families, and during the next fifty years hundreds of Mennonite families from the Palatinate—Swiss and South

³ This warrant was issued to the following persons—John Rudolf Bundely, Martin Kendig, Jacob Miller, Hans Graff, Hans Herr, Christian Herr, Martin Oberholts, Hans Funk, Michael Oberholts, and Weyndel Bowman.

The consideration for the entire tract was five hundred

Germans—were added to the original Pequea colony. For during all these years the Palatines remained poor in Germany and suffered certain religious restrictions in their native land.⁴ Their distress, in the Palatinate, was continually aggravated, too, by the continued arrival of fresh exiles from Switzerland. These conditions, together with the invitation of the king of England, himself a German, to settle in Pennsylvania, as well as the repeated invitation of relatives already here were responsible for the steady stream of immigrants who came to Pennsylvania during the next half century.

Dutch Mennonites Lend a Helping Hand

Although a few of the pioneers were men of means, most of them were too poor to pay their passage money across. The Dutch Mennonites of Amsterdam organized a "Committee of Foreign Needs" to help their needy Swiss and Palatine brethren. By 1732 over three thousand had asked for assistance many of whom were given aid. Among the Germans, themselves, who were active in behalf of their poor were two elders, Benedict Brechtbuhl and Hans Burghalter, who were untiring in their efforts to relieve distress and in enlisting the aid through many letters to the Dutch Mennonites in behalf of those of their numbers who needed help. Both of these names are common today in Lancaster county. Burkhalter was for many years a minister in the Geroldsheim church in the Palatinate, where he died at a ripe old age in 1752.

Heavy Immigration of 1717 and 1727

The year 1717, was one of exceptionally heavy immigration, for many besides Mennonites were now coming

⁴ For a detailed description of the oppression still suffered by the Mennonites of this period, see the chapter on South Germany; also Smith, *The Mennonite Immigration into Pennsylvania in the Eighteenth Century*, chapter II.

to southeastern Pennsylvania, although the pioneer Pequea colony remained largely Mennonite. This settlement expanded until ultimately the Mennonites occupied nearly all of present rural Lancaster county, with some scattered settlements along the edges of the neighboring counties. By 1727 so many Germans had come to Pennsylvania that the English Provincial authorities became alarmed lest the Germans completely dominate the political and social life of the Province. To discourage further immigration a law was passed in the above year levying a head tax upon every immigrant, and compelling every ship captain to submit a complete list of all new arrivals after that date.

Mennonite Arrivals Not Numerous

As to the exact number of Mennonites who came to Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century most estimates are too large. The estimate of one hundred thousand Germans, all told, may not be much out of the way, but of these the Mennonites formed a very small part. The entire number, including children, was certainly not over twenty-five hundred.

By the time of the Revolutionary war, which marked the end of this period of German and Mennonite immigration, the following family names were common in Lancaster county—*Kendig, Miller, Graff, Herr, Overholt, Bowman, Schantz, Weber, Brenneman, Hershey, Brubaker, Baer, Lehman, Witmer, Funk, Shenk, Landes, Huber, Kaufman, Kreider, Boehm, Eby, Brackbill, Burkholder, Stemen, Frick, Erisman, Newcomer, Neff, Boyer, Erb, Reist, Hess, Bookwalter, Nissly, Snavelly, Good, Beyer, Musselman, Meylin, Martin, Root, Ebersole, Wenger, Eschleman, Shellenberger, Mellinger, Bamberger, Risser, Schertz, etc.*

Indian Raids

The Pequea settlement was in the heart of the Indian country. For a time Mennonites and Indians lived on friendly terms, and their children often played together. But as the settlement grew, the Indians moved farther west, and during the later colonial wars the entire frontier from Pennsylvania through to the Virginia settlements often suffered from Indian raids. In 1758 a letter written by several Mennonite ministers to Holland asking for financial help states that two hundred families in Pennsylvania had been robbed of their property by the Indians and fifty persons had been killed. Among these were some Mennonites and Amish.

Naturalization of Germans

According to the laws of Pennsylvania only the English and naturalized non-English could bequeath and inherit property. Since naturalization could be secured only by a special act of Assembly upon petition, German Mennonites frequently found it difficult to become full-fledged citizens. The Germantown Mennonites were naturalized in a body in 1709. No Lancastrians were naturalized until 1729, and then only after years of petitioning. This act did not apply to the Amish, who had to petition separately in 1742. After the latter year, a general act was passed covering all aliens and special petitions were no longer necessary.

Redemptioners

As just noted, the Palatine Mennonites were, with a few exceptions, mostly of the poorer classes and many did not have sufficient means to pay their passage across the Atlantic. Such as did not receive sufficient help from the Dutch relief committee were forced to seek means elsewhere. It was the practice in those days for

poor emigrants to sell their services for a number of years to the ship captain in return for free passage. Such labor the captain could then dispose of as he saw fit. Usually it was sold at public auction to the highest bidder when the ship arrived at Philadelphia. The term of service for an adult was usually four or five years, while a minor served until twenty-one years of age. Persons thus serving for their passage were called Redemptioners. Many of the Pennsylvania immigrants, including not a few Mennonites, were of this class.

Hardships of the Atlantic Voyage

The passage across the Atlantic was long and frequently hazardous. In fair weather and under normal conditions ten or twelve weeks was sufficient for the voyage, and suffering was not great, but in case of contrary winds and storms, ships would often be driven far out of their course. The death rate, especially in cases of small children, was often high. In 1732 the ship, *John and William*, left Rotterdam with two hundred and twenty passengers, including a number of Mennonites. The ship was seventeen weeks on the way and forty-four passengers died enroute. In the same year, another ship from Rotterdam bound for Philadelphia landed at Marthas Vineyard Island after a voyage covering twenty-four weeks. Provisions became short. The passengers had no bread for eight weeks. So great was their hunger that they scoured the ship for vermin. A rat was rated at eighteen pence by the hungry cast-aways, and a mouse at six pence. Seven died in one night. Of the one hundred and fifty passengers that left Rotterdam only fifty survived, one hundred having perished on the way. The next year, the ship *Experiment* left with one hundred and eighty passengers and arrived at New York with only eighty on board.

These were exceptional cases, of course, but even at best a voyage across the ocean in those days was a matter requiring great courage. Added to these hazards beyond human control were others due to the greed of ship owners. Often greedy captains would overcrowd their ships, furnish poor food and by failing to provide proper sanitation greatly increased the death toll. Gottlieb Mittelberger, who arrived in 1750, wrote a book describing the situation on the immigrant ships in the hope of alleviating the worst conditions. Thirty-two died on the ship on which he was a passenger. Among the breeders of disease on shipboard he mentioned "foul water full of worms, salted food, biscuits full of worms and spiders, damp, heat, hunger, lice so thick that they had to be scraped off." Warm food was furnished only three times each week, he said, and children under seven usually died from hunger, thirst and itch. The Pennsylvania Assembly finally passed laws specifying the number of passengers that could be placed on board ship, and regulating the quality of food and sanitary conditions in general. For a long time, too, strict quarantines were maintained to prevent sick passengers from spreading contagious diseases in the Province contracted on board ship due to unsanitary conditions.

Mennonites Mostly Farmers

The Pequea and Skippack Mennonites were of the small farmer class in their Swiss and Palatine homes, and here too, they became tillers of the soil exclusively, avoiding the towns and cities as they developed later. It was the relatively few Scotch-Irish and English who organized and named the townships, cities and other civil units. Although the Mennonites founded the first settlement in Lancaster county and later absorbed nearly the entire county, there are few names on the map out-

side of a number of cross roads post-offices which would indicate a Germanic origin. Lancaster city was founded by the English settlers and developed into one of the most influential towns of the day. It was seriously considered by the first Congress as the permanent Federal Capital. A book on geography in 1816 calls it the largest inland city in America. Although the city is full of the descendants of the pioneer settlers, it was only within recent years that members of the church organized a congregation there. There is today within the county a Mennonite population, including all the families, of about twenty-five thousand.

There was little organized ecclesiastical life among the Mennonites. Each congregation was a unit to itself. Occasionally matters of common concern, however, required united action. In 1727, a conference of all the Pennsylvania congregations was held, just where is not known, to consider among other matters an English translation of their Confession of Faith. The following ministers and congregations were represented at that meeting:

Skippack—Jacob Gotschalk, Henry Kolb, Claes Jansen, Michael Ziegler.

Germantown—John Gorgas, John Conerads, Claes Rittinghausen.

Conestoga—Hans Burghalter, Christian Herr, Benedict Hirschi, Martin Baer, Johannes Bowman.

Great Swamp—Velte Clemer.

Manatant—Daniel Longenecker, Jacob Begthley.

Frequent, but irregular conferences were held later. By 1844 Christian Herr, a local historian writes: "The Mennonite congregations in Pennsylvania are divided into three general circuits within each of which semi-annual conferences consisting of bishops, elders or ministers and deacons are held for the purpose of consulting

each other and devising means to advance the spiritual prosperity of the members."

Among the Palatines were a number of peace sects having much in common with the Mennonites. Among these were the Dunkards, who had their origin in Germany in 1708 and moved bodily to Germantown in 1719. They followed the Mennonites to their Skippack and Pequea settlements where their proselyting zeal gained a number of adherents to their faith. Conrad Beisel, one of their number, withdrew from them in 1728 and founded at Ephrata the Seventh Day Baptist monastic community. The old community house where the brethren lived, monk fashion, in their cells is still standing, a venerable old reminder of the good old days long past. Several of the early Mennonite pioneers were drawn into this movement. The attempt of Count Zinzendorf to unite all the Pennsylvania Palatines into one church did not seriously affect the Mennonites. Some Mennonites, however, were won to the Methodist revival which struck Pennsylvania during the latter quarter of the century. Among them was Martin Boehm, Mennonite bishop at Willow Street, who as noted elsewhere together with Otterbein, a Reformed minister, founded the United Brethren church, but who later also became one of the pioneer Methodist preachers in Pennsylvania.

About the same time, too, Jacob Engel, once a Mennonite, became the founder of the River Brethren.

The Mennonites were not a proselyting people, nor were they active in the spreading of their propaganda. Consequently, although they lost large numbers of their members to other churches, they scarcely ever gained any in return.

One of the chief reasons for the loss of membership, chiefly among the younger people, was the ultra conservatism of the great mass of the Pennsylvania churches.

Large, compact communities maintained a much stronger spirit of conservatism than did the smaller, more open daughter colonies established in the States farther west. Lancaster county with some hundred congregations of Old Mennonites and several other groups of conservative branches totaling a population of perhaps some twenty-five thousand souls, is still reluctant to affiliate upon terms of equality even with other congregations of its own branch of the denomination in the western States. Had the Pennsylvania Mennonites been as able to hold their young people in the church as have their Russian brethren, they, together with their daughter settlements, ought to have a membership of at least several hundred thousand today.

EARLY AMISH COLONIES

Just when the first Amish came to America is not known to a certainty. Likely a few stragglers may have been included among the early Mennonite immigrants. It was not until about 1736, however, that the Amish came in sufficient numbers to establish their own settlements and form a congregation. During the twenty year period between 1735 and 1755 among the Amish immigrants, also Swiss Palatines, who claim a long line of descendants today all through the country may be mentioned Jacob Hochstetler; Jacob Beiler; Jacob Hartzler; the Jotters⁵, Christian and Jacob; the Zug brothers⁶, Christian, Moritz and Johannes; Christian Hershberger, Christian Stutsman, and the bearers of such names as *Blauch*,⁷ *Fisher*, *Troyer*,⁸ *Detweiler*, *Miller*, *Mast*, *Kaufman*, *Koenig*,⁹ *Lantz*, *Schrag*, *Umble*,¹⁰ *Stolfus*, *Peachey*,¹¹ *Gnaegi*,¹² *Hoelly*,¹³ *Lap*, etc. This list includes almost all of the

5 Now Yoder. 6 Now Zook. 7. Now Blough. 8. Originally Treyer. 9. Anglicized, as King. 10. Originally Ummel. 11. Original spelling not certain, perhaps Bietsch, the name of a

common names of the Pennsylvania Amish and their descendants today. Few names were added to this list after the French and Indian War—among others Jacob Borntreger in 1767, and Jacob Coblentz in 1770.

The Northkill Settlement

The first settlement and congregation was formed in 1736, some distance to the north of the Pequea Mennonite settlement, near a gap in the Blue mountains, in what is now northern Berks county, a region then spoken of as Northkill. Why these Amish established their colony so far out on the Indian frontier is not known, undoubtedly, however, because of the cheap lands, and perhaps partly because they did not wish to be too near their Mennonite brethren. By 1742 the settlement was large enough to petition the General Assembly for the rights of naturalization, without which they could not purchase land. Several other small colonies were located a little farther south in the same county soon after. But the entire number of Amish immigrants to Pennsylvania was not large during the eighteenth century, perhaps all told not over five hundred souls.

Indian Raids

The Northkill location was not a happy one; it was too near the Indian frontier for safety. In the course of the French and Indian war, during a series of Indian raids in 1757, in which several hundred settlers all along the frontier line were massacred, many of the Amish families were driven from their new homes. Jacob Hochstetler's home was attacked and his wife and two chil-

town in the Palatinate. 12. Anglicized into *Kenagy*. 13. Now *Hooly*. Among the immigrants to Ohio of the same family one hundred years later the name appears as *Holly*.

dren were murdered, and another was carried away by the Indians. A few of the Amish came back after the war. Most of them sought safety nearer the older settlements in Lancaster and western Chester counties. The pioneer Northkill congregation eventually disappeared entirely.

Religious Practices

The Amish brought with them from their Palatine home all the conservatism and suspicion of their Mennonite brethren which characterized their religious life in Germany. A report sent to Europe in 1773 by several Mennonite ministers in the Skippack colony in describing the different Mennonite settlements in Pennsylvania report:

“As to the Amish, they are many in number but they are not here near us and we can give no further information except only this, that they hold very fast to the outward and ancient institutions.”

Among the “outward and ancient” institutions which differentiated them from the Mennonites at that time was the *Meidung*¹⁴ and footwashing, the latter of which the Pequea Mennonites also later adopted, though it was perhaps not practised among them at the time of their immigration. The Amish were more conservative than the Mennonites in their dress regulations as well as in their social and religious practises in general. They retained their long hair, beards, obsolete styles of clothing, hooks and eyes, and broad brimmed hats. The women even more always appeared in out-moded styles of dress. They scrupulously avoided following the changing social customs of the period. They met in private homes for wor-

¹⁴ *Meidung* is a German word turned into English today among such as are familiar with this practise as “Avoidance,” sometimes also as “Shunning.” *Meidung* it will be remembered was the chief cause of the Amish separation from the Mennonites in Switzerland in 1693.

ship, as had been their custom in Europe. In their church government they were congregational, though frequently the elders met to agree upon common rules for the guidance of their members in their social and religious practises.

These regulations were never printed, but were kept in manuscript carefully preserved by the church leaders and often copied from generation to generation, many of them still in force among the Old Order today. The Strasburg rules of 1568, drawn up before the Amman controversy of 1693, of course, seemingly were popular among the Amish of both Europe and America. As new conditions arose, new regulations became necessary. Although we have no record of any such new rules during the eighteenth century, yet in 1809 the Pennsylvania elders in a meeting found it necessary to insist that the *Meidung* applied to eating and drinking as well as to all social and business intercourse, and must be so observed by the members. Shaving, trimming the beard, jury service, these also were under the ban; while high collared coats,¹⁵ high trousers,¹⁶ high hats, combs in the hair, and such other like worldly customs were to be *gar nicht geduldet*.¹⁷

Somewhat later, in 1857, in a meeting of the ministers of Somerset and surrounding counties, a daughter colony of the original eastern Pennsylvania settlement, mothers were especially warned against dressing their children extravagantly, such worldly vanities as silk neckscarfs tied in a fancy bow, high collars on the boys' shirts, men's hats for the daughters; it was decreed that

15 No doubt the modern coat collar with a lapel.

16 Perhaps long pants. Just about this time, too, partly as a result of the social effects of the French Revolution, knee breeches, symbol of autocracy, were everywhere giving way to long pants, *sansculottes*, symbol of democracy.

17 Absolutely prohibited.

such "shall not be." Fancy house decorations, too, were discouraged, bright colored paints, fancy glass dishes on the shelves, and mirrors on the walls. Jury service and voting was again tabooed. Parents were warned especially against permitting their children to indulge too freely and recklessly in the pleasures of sleighing parties. Two-colored painted sleighs and vehicles were not allowed. Parents would be held personally responsible for permitting among the young folks the practise of bundling.¹⁸

From this early pioneer settlement in Berks county a large Amish colony has since developed, covering the northeastern corner of what is now Lancaster county, the northwestern nook of Chester county, and the southern tip of Berks, of about seven thousand souls, many still of the *Old Order* with dress and customs and practises not far removed from those of their pioneer ancestors. The daughter colonies farther west, of course, are not here included in these statistics.

18 The custom of courting under bed covers in many parts of New England and Pennsylvania in the Colonial days when stoves were scarce and living space in the small houses limited.

X

EXPANSION OF THE PIONEER SETTLEMENTS (1683-1800)

Before the middle of the eighteenth century the best lands of southeastern Pennsylvania had been occupied by the German and Scotch Irish immigrants. Consequently the children of the pioneers as well as later immigrants were forced to push the frontier line of settlements up the river valleys into the interior of Pennsylvania and Virginia. In the very front of this advancing tide were usually found a number of Mennonites, who settled in small colonies far out on the frontier where land was cheap, and where room for expansion was ample.

MARYLAND

Before the French and Indian war, Lancaster county Mennonites, following the advancing tide of settlements, planted colonies across the Susquehanna in York county, and then through the Cumberland valley in Cumberland and Franklin counties, Pennsylvania, and Washington County, Maryland. Although a few stray Mennonites may have remained in the Cumberland valley in the early rush into the Shenandoah, yet it was not until well toward the close of the century that the settlements were sufficiently large to form separate church congregations. On the Maryland side of the Valley, however, they were sufficiently numerous in 1776 to demand some recognition upon their refusal to bear arms during the Revolutionary war from the state convention, which was then drafting a new constitution.

THE SHENANDOAH

As just indicated, the Cumberland Valley at first served as a convenient passage way through which the Pennsylvania Mennonites and the other Germans entered the beautiful Shenandoah. Here at Massanutting along the South Fork of the Shenandoah near what is now Luray, in Page county, in 1729, in the very first German settlement in the valley, were found a few Lancaster county Mennonites. In a few years the Mennonites formed the largest contingent of the Germans in that pioneer settlement, although there were perhaps never more than several dozen families in that place. These settlements in Page county were never prosperous, and have long since become extinct. During the French and Indian war the Indians made raids into the valley, and carried off many of the settlers. In one of these raids, in 1766, John Rhodes, a Mennonite minister, his wife, three sons and two daughters were killed by the Indians, and a surviving son was carried away, who after three years of captivity returned to his friends. Many families were compelled to return to Pennsylvania during these times. This colony, too, was located in what was called the Northern Neck, a region to which Lord Fairfax for many years tried to establish a private claim. During this controversy many of the settlers, including the Mennonites, feeling themselves insecure in their land titles, moved farther up into the valley in what is now Rockingham and Augusta counties. By about 1800, the Mennonites had occupied the greater part of the Linville valley, which embraced the region extending from Linville Creek on the east to the North Mountain on the west, and the Shenandoah on the north, to Linville and Singers Glen on the south, a district about ten miles long by eight miles wide. After 1780, however, when Harrisonburg

was founded as the county seat of the newly organized Rockingham county, many of the Linville settlers located west of the new town, where a large Mennonite community has since developed.

The Virginia Mennonites were the only members of their faith within the late slaveholding Confederacy. To their credit be it said that, true to their religious principles, they never held slaves. Their attitude toward slavery is perhaps well illustrated in the following incident told by the Quaker, John Woolman, in his well-known Journal, in the course of one of his numerous journeys through Virginia in 1758. Says Woolman:

At Monalen a Friend gave me some account of a religious Society among the Dutch called Mennonists, and among other things related a passage in substance as follows: One of the Mennonists having an acquaintance with a man of another society at a considerable distance, and being with his wagon on business near the house of his said acquaintance, and night coming on, he had thoughts of putting up with him, but passing by his friend's fields, and observing the distressed appearance of his slaves, he kindled a fire in the woods hard by, and lay there for the night. His said acquaintance hearing where he lodged, and afterward meeting the Mennonist, told him of it, adding he should have been heartily welcomed at his house, and from their acquaintance in former time wondered at his conduct in that case. The Mennonist replied, Ever since I lodged by thy field I have wanted an opportunity to speak with thee. I had intended to come to thy house for entertainment, but seeing thy slaves at their work, and observing the manner of their dress, I had no liking to come to partake with thee. He then admonished him to use them with more humanity, and added, As I lay by the fire that night, I thought that as I was a man of substance thou wouldst have received me freely; but if I had been as poor as one of thy slaves and had no power to help myself, I should have received from thy hand no kinder usage than they.

As late as 1864, at a time when it took great courage in the South to oppose the institution, the Mennonites

went on record in a conference resolution to the following effect:

Decided that inasmuch as it is against our creed and discipline to own or traffic in slaves, so it is also forbidden a brother to hire a slave unless such slave be entitled to receive the pay for such labor by the consent of the owner. But where neighbors exchange labor, the labor of slaves may be received.

During the first half of the past century, the Virginia Mennonites developed considerable interest in literary and musical activities. Among the early Virginia families were the Funks. One of these, Joseph Funk, especially, was active in this direction. He was a school teacher, and also a publisher of Mennonite books and tracts, as well as of sacred melodies, and music books, on the first Mennonite printing press in America. In 1832 he compiled a book of sacred melodies called *Harmonia Sacra*, which had a wide circulation not only through Virginia, but throughout the Mennonite church at large. It went through seventeen editions, the last one appearing in the latter seventies of the past century. To the passing generation of Mennonites in the Shenandoah today the *Harmonia Sacra* is what the McGuffey readers are to the old timers in Ohio. Singers Glen, the original home of the publishing house, was known far and wide through the Valley in its day as a center of sacred music. In 1837 Funk also translated and published the so-called "Long" Confession of Faith of thirty-three articles found in the *Martyrs' Mirror*, together with *Nine Reflections* by Bishop Peter Burkholder.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Along the Juniata

In the meantime the tide of settlement had ascended the Susquehanna and Juniata. In 1772 John Graybil

from Lancaster county began a colony on the Mahantago in Snyder county, near what is now Richfield. A little later several other small Mennonite communities were established near by, and in neighboring counties, but these never became large, and most of them finally disappeared. The largest settlement in this general region was formed by Lancaster and Berks county Amish, near the close of the century in the picturesque valley of the Kishacoquillas, in what is now Mifflin county. This picturesque valley is now almost completely occupied by an equally picturesque colony of Amish comprising nearly three thousand souls, mostly of the Old Order, but including also about all the varieties of Amish known.

On the Headwaters of the Ohio

About the same time, too, in 1767, Christian Blauch founded an Amish settlement near the headwaters of the Ohio river. This early settlement, made even before the Indians had been officially removed from the land, has grown since into a number of large Amish and several Mennonite congregations covering Westmorland, Fayette and Somerset counties. Among other early Amishmen to locate in this region was Joseph Schantz, founder in 1800 of Johnstown, famous for its flood in the eighties of the past century.

ONTARIO

The largest and most important of the daughter colonies of this period was the one located across the Great Lakes, in Ontario at the very end of the century. By this time land prices in the thickly settled regions of southeastern Pennsylvania had risen extraordinarily high. But it was not population pressure alone that induced the surplus population of the older Mennonite congrega-

tions to seek a new home under a foreign though familiar flag. The Canadian Mennonites of today would have us believe that their forefathers were merely continuing their traditional Mennonite quest for religious toleration. But the case is not so simple as that. The motives back of the Canadian trek were mixed.

It is well known, of course, that the Pennsylvania Mennonites, because of their non-resistant doctrines were opposed to political revolutions of any sort, including the revolution of 1776; and consequently they were frequently accused by the revolutionary party as lukewarm toward the American cause and sometimes even as sympathetic toward the loyalists. In a few cases they were imprisoned, their property confiscated, and their lives threatened by superpatriotic mobs. The period of anarchy immediately following the war did not add to their feeling of security under the Confederation Congress. But the Mennonite movement to Canada continued long after a stable constitutional government had been established in the United States, and the young state of Pennsylvania had guaranteed both the Mennonites and the Quakers full religious toleration including military exemption in its fundamental law.

The Canadian government on the other hand, then still under direct English control, offered liberal inducements, and free lands to the loyalists of the States during this early period before the adoption of our constitution; and thousands of American loyalists took advantage of these liberal terms, settling a large part of what is now Upper Ontario. This region was still the Canadian West at that time, with wide stretches of unoccupied lands awaiting industrious settlers. Being especially desirous of settlers of good reputation, the Canadian authorities offered exceptional inducements including military exemption to Quakers and allied groups.

And so, while a few of the earlier Mennonite settlers before 1800 may have followed the loyalists to Canada because of their preference for the familiar Union Jack to the recently adopted Stars and Stripes, that could not have been the chief inducement to the numerous immigrants who continued the trek to the valley of the Grand long after the United States constitution had insured a secure and prosperous life on this side of the Great Lakes. The Mennonites from the crowded settlements of Pennsylvania went to Canada largely, among perhaps lesser reasons, because land was cheap and fertile; and because before the day of railroads and hard roads it was easier to follow the river valleys to the north and west into Canada than to cross the mountains over rough wagon trails into western Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The Twenty

By the turn of the century three separate Mennonite settlements had been established across the Niagara in Ontario. The first of these was founded in 1786 near the mouth of Twenty Mile creek where it empties into the south shore of Lake Ontario about twenty miles west of the Niagara, by five families from Bucks county, Pennsylvania—the Kulps, John, Dilman, and Stoffel; and Franklin Albright, and Frederick Hahn.¹ Others followed settlement was made, followed by a church congregation in 1801, with a total number of perhaps about one hundred souls. Soon other congregations were formed in the surrounding country, mostly from Bucks, Lancaster and other Pennsylvania counties. In the course of a short time several small settlements were also made to the south, on the northern shore of Lake Erie.

1 There is some question as to whether these were Mennonites, but if not they were soon after followed by others who were. in the years immediately succeeding until a substantial

Waterloo County

A much larger colony was established about the same time some sixty miles to the northwest, farther out on the frontier, where land was still cheaper in the heavily timbered valley along the Grand river. Two men and their families, Joseph Schoerg and Samuel Betzner of Franklin county, Pennsylvania, were the pioneers in this settlement, locating on the Grand river near what is now Kitchener, but then merely a howling wilderness. This whole region had just recently been vacated by the Indians, and was still unsettled except by a few wandering fur traders. Schoerg and Betzner were the first permanent white settlers, it is said, within what is now Waterloo county.² Later, in the same year, several more families from Lancaster county located here, to be followed each year by many others.

The Beasley Fraud

But in 1803 it was accidentally discovered that the farms which had thus far been purchased for several dollars per acre from a land speculator by the name of Richard Beasley, as well as the neighboring tract, were all heavily mortgaged, a fact which speculator Beasley did not mention at the time of the sale. For the time being immigration ceased; and the colony seemingly was about to be broken up, when a group of Lancaster county brethren came to the rescue. Upon the advice of old Hans Eby, a group of Lancaster Mennonites formed a sort of stock company to buy up the entire tract of sixty thousand acres, about two-thirds of entire Waterloo township. The tract was divided into one hundred and thirty-four parcels of four hundred and forty-eight acres each. By paying

2 L. J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites of Ontario*, p. 34.

off the first installment of the purchase price, twenty thousand dollars, the mortgage was released, and the title cleared. This was still before the days of banking. The whole sum in silver coin was safely carried by wagon to Canada, a feat that could not be duplicated in this day of bank robbers.

This effort at cooperation seemingly met with popular approval; for a few years later another stock company along similar lines was formed to purchase a tract of forty-five thousand acres in a neighboring township—Woolwich. This land, too, was paid for with a barrel full of gold and silver, carted without mishap all the way from Pennsylvania.³

Immigration to the Waterloo colony was again resumed now, and during the next twenty years numerous families, largely from Lancaster county, but from all the other older settlements of Pennsylvania, as well, were added. A little village soon developed within the settlement, at first called Ebytown, but upon the advice of Benjamin Eby changed in 1827 to Berlin, then during the recent war once more changed to Kitchener.

Markham

In the meantime the uncertainties caused by the Beasley fraud deflected the immigrant tide for a few years in a new direction. In this same year, 1803, Henry Wideman, a Mennonite preacher from Bucks county, started a new settlement near Markham, some twenty miles north of what was then known as York, but now as Toronto. Several small congregations have since developed in this region.

During the war of 1812 communication between the Canadians and their Pennsylvania brethren was broken

³ L. J. Burkholder, p. 37.

up, and there was no immigration for a few years, but it was resumed again soon after. The Mennonites were not forced to serve in the army, but a number were impressed with their teams into the transportation service in the Niagara region during the battles that were fought in that area.

Common Names

Among the most common names within these three original Canadian settlements are *Bauman, Bechtel, Bergey, Betzner, Brubaker, Burkholder, Cressman, Detweiler, Eby, Erb, Gehman, Gingrich, Groff, Hagey, Horst, Honsberger, Hoffman, Hoch, Hallman, Hoover, Kolb, Martin, Moyer, Musselman, Reist, Reichert, Shenk, Stauffer, Snyder, Shoemaker, Schantz, Wismer, Witmer*, etc.

All told between 1786 and 1825 perhaps about two thousand Mennonites, including children, migrated to Ontario from Pennsylvania.

Later Amish and Russian Immigrants

Beginning with 1824 several hundred Amish immigrants from Europe also located near the Waterloo Mennonites. In recent years also a number of Russian Mennonite immigrants remained in Ontario. Today the total Mennonite population, including all the branches, according to government statistics, counts up approximately to sixteen thousand.

Pioneer Hardships

These early pioneers were of hardy stock and endured the usual pioneer hardships. The journey from the Pennsylvania settlements to Waterloo covered about five hundred miles, and was made sometimes on horseback, but most often with the well-known Conestoga wagon,

well stocked with household utensils, and bounteous eating supplies, drawn by four or five sturdy horses, and sometimes accompanied with cows that furnished milk along the way. The route usually followed to Waterloo, took the home seekers up the Susquehanna, across the Finger Lake region in New York, up the Mohawk to the Niagara, a little below Buffalo, then by way of what is now Hamilton; through the almost impassable "Beverly Swamp" to their new home on the Grand.

Of course, they were all genuine Pennsylvania Dutch, and brought with them to their Canadian homes their Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, Pennsylvania Dutch tastes, social customs, and religious practises.

Like Mennonites everywhere their first task after making the first clearings for their log huts, was to organize a church congregation and establish a school for their children. Among the early spiritual leaders was preacher, then later Bishop Benjamin Eby, who came to Waterloo in 1805; and for fifty years was a leading spirit throughout all the settlements. In 1813 the first Waterloo meeting house was built on Eby's farm, and was known as the Eby church until well into the beginning of the present century. Here bishop Eby preached and also kept school for many years. He also was interested in a printing establishment which printed many pamphlets and church tracts, throughout the period, including a short history of the Mennonites written by himself in 1841.

XI

DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Because the Mennonites, with their non-resistant principles did not actively participate in the Revolutionary war on either side, and because they refused to join the army and hesitated generally to take the oath required in the various tests of allegiance to the new state governments after 1776, they were suspected of loyalist preferences, and frequently classified with the Tories. In the compact settlements, where their principles were well known, they were not seriously molested by their non-Mennonite neighbors; but in isolated communities, where they were in the minority, they were frequently given the same harsh treatment by local authorities and irresponsible mobs as though they were bona-fide loyalists.

From actual military drill, which was prescribed by the Pennsylvania Assembly, the Mennonites and other peace denominations were exempt, but they were to pay an extra sum of money called a fine for this privilege. These fines were paid with little objection, but as to whether they could consistently pay the special war tax which was levied upon all the inhabitants, there was some difference of opinion. Many of them joined the Quakers in their opposition to helping the war with their means as well as by actual bearing of arms. A discussion of this question in Montgomery county, in 1776, led to the first division in the American Mennonite church. In that year a meeting was held in Indianfield township in the above county for the purpose of choosing three men to represent the township in a general state convention which

was to determine whether Pennsylvania should join the other colonies in declaring her independence from England. Most of the Mennonites who were present declared that since they were a "defenseless" people and could neither institute nor destroy any government, they could not interfere in tearing themselves away from the king."

Among those present was a minister, Christian Funk, who, though a staunch defender of the cause of Congress, did not at this time seem to offer any serious objection to the above declaration. The following year, however, when some of his fellow ministers declared that their non-resistant principles forbade them pay a special war tax of "three pounds and ten shillings," Funk protested and maintained that the tax should be paid. "Were Christ here," he said, "He would say, Give to Congress that which belongs to Congress and to God that which belongs to God." Andrew Ziegler, the spokesman for the opposite party, replied,—"I would as soon go to war as pay the three pounds and ten shillings." Funk was finally excommunicated, in 1778, for these views, and together with those who believed as he did, he organized several small congregations of his own throughout the county. This small group of people, called *Funkites*, retained a separate organization until 1850, when long after the participants in the original dispute had died, it became extinct.

The majority of the Mennonites of Pennsylvania objected not only to the payment of the special war tax, but also to the new oath of allegiance which was required of all citizens after the Declaration of Independence. Not that they did not wish to be loyal citizens of Pennsylvania, but in addition to their opposition to all oaths, they feared that this one in particular would commit them to the cause of the war. Many refused to take the oath, and some who took it were excommunicated from the church. The

state authorities, however, knowing their scruples against both the oath and war, and that they were not disloyal, were inclined to treat them leniently.

That the local citizens were not always as considerate of conscientious scruples as the state authorities is shown by a hand bill which was distributed among the citizens of Lancaster county by the local Committee of Inspection and Observation in 1775. This interesting handbill, which appears among the exhibits in the museum of Independence Hall in Philadelphia¹ is self-explanatory and reads

The Committee having received information that divers persons, whose religious tenets forbid their forming themselves into Military Associations, have been maltreated and threatened by some violent and ill-disposed people in the County of Lancaster, notwithstanding their otherwise willingness to contribute cheerfully to the common cause than by taking up arms.

The Committee, duly considering the same, do most heartily recommend to the good inhabitants of the County that they use every possible means to discourage and prevent such licentious proceedings and assiduously cultivate that harmony and union so absolutely necessary in the present crisis in public affairs. At the same time they consider it to be their indispensable duty to intimate to the public their entire disapprobation of any abuse, opprobrious or insulting expressions that may be made use of by any persons whatsoever against such of the respectable inhabitants who may think proper to associate for the defense and support of their inestimable rights and privileges.

The Committee will find means to bring such impudent persons to a proper sense of their misconduct. Yet they ardently wish and hope that no further violence, threats or animosities may appear, but that every member of the Community will readily use his utmost endeavors to promote peace, good order and unanimity among the inhabitants of this respectable County.

In Northampton County an isolated group of Men-

¹ Seen here in 1906.
as follows:

nonites near Saucon, because they hesitated to take the new oath of allegiance required by law, were classed with the Tories, by the local courts, and treated accordingly. They were sent to jail, all their goods, including their bedding, household utensils and even food, were confiscated; and they were ordered out of the state within thirty days by order of the court.

Records are not available as to the final enforcement of the order. We know that the men were in jail, however, for we have a record of a petition sent by the wives to the court for the release of their husbands, since they were entirely destitute and without support.

There are numerous family traditions among both the Mennonites and the Amish of the period, especially in Berks and surrounding counties where Mennonite settlements were not large, of jail sentence and mistreatment by local authorities and citizens because of conscientious scruples against participating in war activities.

Although the Mennonites did not bear arms during the war, several of the engagements took place in Mennonite communities. The battle of Germantown was fought in the vicinity of the little Mennonite meeting house which still shows the scars of the battle to this day. The Valley Forge winter quarters were located in the Skippack region. A number of the Mennonites were impressed into the service at the time, while the headquarters of a number of officers were in the homes of Mennonite farmers nearby. In Lancaster county, too, the horses and wagons of the rich farmers were frequently impressed into the quartermaster service during the Pennsylvania campaigns.

Apostasy of Martin Boehm

Another event, the apostasy of Martin Boehm, while not a result of the war, yet occurred at this time and may

as well be told here as elsewhere. Boehm was a Mennonite bishop at Willow Street in Lancaster county. During a visit to Virginia in 1761 he came into contact with a revival movement and was greatly influenced by it. By 1775 he had aroused the ill-will of his fellow ministers by his fiery preaching and was expelled. In the meantime the Methodists had entered Pennsylvania, and Boehm soon cast his lot with them, becoming one of the pioneer Methodist preachers in Lancaster county. In 1800, together with Otterbein, a minister of the Reformed church, he also became the founder of what is now known as the United Brethren church. In 1805 he was elected a bishop in the United Brethren church, but in the meantime also had his name enrolled in the Methodist class book. Whether he was a Methodist or United Brethren was perhaps not quite clear to his friends, as the following epitaph which appears on the stone marking his last resting place by the Side of Boehm Chapel in Lancaster county would indicate.

“Here lie the remains of Rev. Martin Boehm, who departed this life (after a short illness) March 23, 1812, in the 87th year of his age. Fifty-four years he fully preached the Gospel to thousands, and labored in the Vineyard of the Lord Jesus in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia among many denominations, but particularly the Mennonites, United Brethren and Methodists, with the last of whom he lived and died in fellowship. He not only gave himself and his services to the church, but also fed the Lord’s prophets and people by multitudes. He was an *Israelite* in whom was no guile. His end was peace.”

XII

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1.

WESTWARD EXPANSION

PENNSYLVANIA AND VIRGINIA EMIGRANTS

Ohio

During the first half of the nineteenth century numerous colonies of Mennonites from both the original and daughter settlements beyond the Alleghenies in both Pennsylvania and Virginia were established within the states of the old Northwest Territory. In the very opening of the century, and before Ohio became a state, a small colony had been started within the boundaries of that state. Among a group of colonists from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, who had founded the present town of Lancaster in Fairfield county, just ten years after Marietta was settled, was a Mennonite named Martin Landis, who a few years later built a meeting house on his farm to be at the service of all denominations desiring to use it. Several years later a number of Mennonites came to the same region from Pennsylvania and Virginia. Among these was Henry Stemen, who settled near the present town of Bremen in 1803, and who became one of the pioneer Mennonite bishops of the state.

During the next fifty years a number of communities were organized by Easterners in various parts of the state, wherever cheap lands in good farming regions were to be found. Congregations were begun in Stark county

in 1811; in Mahoning and Columbiana counties equally as early if not earlier; and in Wayne and Medina counties in 1825, and 1834, respectively. Before the Civil war, small groups had located throughout northwestern Ohio in Allen, Putnam, Hancock, Wood, Seneca, Williams, Ashland, Clark and Franklin counties. With the exception of several small congregations near Elida, in Allen county, these latter have practically all become extinct.¹ During these years, too, a large number of Europeans, both Mennonites and Amish, located in Ohio, as did also a number of Amish from Pennsylvania. In 1852 also minister Ephraim Hunsberger of the Oberholtzer following from Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, organized a congregation at Wadsworth, in Medina county.

New York

During the same period several small settlements had been made in northwestern New York not far from the Niagara boundary. Natives from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, had located in Niagara county in 1810, and in Erie county in 1824. In 1831 several German families from the Palatinate found their way here also. These communities never grew large, however, and are now nearly extinct.

Indiana

The first Mennonites in Indiana were the Swiss, who came in 1838. The first native members of the church, however, came from Ohio under the leadership of John Smith from Medina county, who visited Elkhart county, Indiana, in 1843. Two years later he returned with others and began a community in Harrison township in the above county. Other Ohioans followed, and soon

¹ See J. S. Umble, in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, January, 1832 for a detailed history of the Mennonite congregations in Fairfield and Allen Counties.

several congregations were formed in the county. In 1853 a group of Hollanders from Europe joined the present Salem congregation. There are at present eleven congregations of original Old Mennonites in Indiana, and several in Michigan. Several church divisions occurred in Indiana during the early seventies, one led by Jacob Wisler, and the other by Daniel Brenneman, but these are discussed elsewhere in this book. There are also a number of Wisler and Mennonite Brethren congregations now in the region of the early settlement.

Illinois

Mennonites reached Illinois even earlier than Indiana, coming to that state only a few years later than the Amish. The first Mennonite family to locate in Illinois was that of Benjamin Kendig from Augusta county, Virginia, who left his home in the spring of 1833 in search of better opportunities for himself in the far west. Loading all his worldly possessions on three Conestoga wagons, he began his journey overland through Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois for his western home. In October of the same year, after a journey of eight hundred miles, which was made in seven weeks, he reached what was then known as Holland's Grove in Tazewell county, where he began the first Mennonite community in Illinois near the Amish settlements begun two years before. Others followed from Virginia and Pennsylvania, but the community never grew large and at times was scarcely able to maintain itself as a religious organization. Between this and 1865 a number of small groups of Mennonites from the East located throughout the state, but none of them were large. The entire membership today of all the scattered communities is barely over five hundred. Among the congregations are those at Freeport, founded in the forties; Cullom, in Livingston county, established in 1858;

Sterling, founded about the same time; and Morrison, in 1865. Several other congregations were organized which have since become extinct. In 1842 also was begun the German colony in St. Clair county. There is also a small congregation of Pennsylvanian Reformed Mennonites, near Sterling, formed in 1847. The large Amish settlements, throughout central Illinois described elsewhere, do not belong to the group discussed in these paragraphs.

Beyond the Mississippi

Throughout the states beyond the Mississippi, too, after the Civil war small scattered groups of Mennonites from the East were located in Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Idaho, Colorado, Oregon, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Texas and several other states. The entire membership, however, west of the Mississippi of such churches as migrated from the East, most of which belong to the Old Mennonite branch, exclusive of the Amish and later European immigrants, of course, is scarcely over one thousand.

These pioneers in the far West had to endure all the usual hardships of frontier life. Many were homesteaders, and all were poor. In the early seventies the grasshopper plague, and later hot winds, drove many either back East or to other more favorable western localities. Others remained and have since become fairly prosperous.

The Amish Also Move West

The transAllegheny settlements just described in this chapter, as just indicated, were from the Mennonite congregations only. The Amish also followed the lure of the cheap lands of the west during this period, and established many new colonies in all these states.

The pioneer Amish in Ohio were "Yockle" Miller

and his two sons and their families from Somerset county Pennsylvania, who located along Sugar Creek in Tuscarawas county in 1808. These were followed soon by many others from the same region. Although the further settlement was temporarily halted for a few years by the dangers of Indian raids in the war of 1812, and the early comers had been driven back east, yet soon after the war, additional arrivals flocked to the new colony in large numbers until they spread across the western part of Tuscarawas county, and the eastern end of Holmes, forming what is today one of the largest compact Amish communities in America, still largely of the hook and eye variety.

Some years later Pennsylvania Amish communities were formed in Wayne, Fairfield, Logan, and Champaign counties, and still later in Geauga county, in all of which, except in Fairfield, large compact settlements are still found.

By 1840 the westward tide had reached Indiana. A group of landseekers from Somerset county, including preacher Joe Miller, after visiting Iowa and walking back much of the way through Indiana, decided to locate in Elkhart county east of what is now Goshen. From Pennsylvania and some of the older Ohio settlements there were developed within the next twenty-five years numerous congregations in Elkhart, Noble, LaGrange, Marshall, Adams, Newton, Howard, Miami, Allen, Jasper, Davis and Brown counties.

Between 1848 and 1852 several Mifflin county families founded the Rock Creek congregation in McLean county, Illinois. After the Civil war another large community of conservative Pennsylvanians, largely from Somerset county, established the Moultrie and Douglas county congregations.

In Iowa the first colony of native Amish was estab-

lished in 1846 in Johnson county by a number of Pennsylvanians. In more recent years the lure of cheap lands has called numerous colonies from all these older states to Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas, Oregon, Colorado, Oklahoma, the Dakotas, Montana and Idaho.

THE NEW IMMIGRANT TIDE

In the meantime a new immigrant tide of both Mennonites and Amish had set in between 1820 and 1860. The Mennonites came from Switzerland and Bavaria, and Hesse-Darmstadt, while the Amish were largely from France, principally Alsace and Lorraine. To the general causes of this mass immigration movement after the Napoleonic wars—militarism and the fear of it, economic distress, and political unrest, caused by such revolutionary years as 1820, 1830, and 1848 may be added as a further attractive force this side of the Atlantic,—the rapid expansion and economic development of the middle west during this period. Directly after the war of 1812, statistics show that the immigration tide from all classes from middle and western Europe rose rapidly, culminating especially in the high record of the year 1820. Enthusiastic letters to friends and relatives in Europe from those already here, and systematic advertising on the part of the ship companies in all the large centers of population greatly aided the immigration movement during those years.

In addition to all these causes which affected all classes more or less, we saw that the Mennonites were especially concerned about the military question. The Mennonites of France, South Germany and Switzerland had all been pressed into service during the Napoleonic wars. At the same time they were trying to maintain their non-resistance. The Ibersheim Conference of 1803

threatened with excommunication all the young men who voluntarily joined the army. The fear lest they might not be able to maintain their peace principles was a strong factor in determining the immigration of so many Mennonites.

The Swiss

Among the first of the immigrants of the new tide were the Swiss from both the Jura and the Emmental settlements.² The pioneer of the Swiss movement was Benedict Schraag from Basel, who located with his family in what is now Wayne county, Ohio, as early as 1817. As a result of enthusiastic letters written back to his friends, two years later, four families from the Jura congregations—Peter Lehman, Isaac Sommer, Ulrich Lehman and David Kirchhofer—began the large settlement known as the Sonnenberg congregation near Dalton. In the years immediately following many other families joined these early pioneers from both the communities in the canton of Bern. Two large congregations were formed in Wayne county; and in 1833 Michael Neuenschwander, who had come to Wayne county from Switzerland ten years before, began another colony in what is now Allen county, along the banks of Riley creek, three miles northwest of what is now Bluffton, but then a howling wilderness. In the years immediately following, numerous Swiss and several Alsatians located in this region, and the community has since developed into four large congregations, embracing an entire Mennonite population of nearly twenty-five hundred.

In the meantime, before 1838, Daniel Baumgartner and several others from Wayne county began another settlement in Adams county, Indiana. In a few years a

² For the specific causes of the Swiss migration see the chapter on Switzerland.

small group of his fellow-believers had settled in the same region and had formed a church. It was not until the years from 1852 to 1854, however, that large numbers came from Switzerland and laid the foundation of the present large congregation at Berne. This community now embraces about two thousand souls. The congregation of over twelve hundred members worships in the largest and finest Mennonite church house in America, and at one time, for many years, under the able leadership of Elder S. F. Sprunger, it was one of the most progressive congregations in the entire denomination.



Berne Mennonite Church

From these pioneer Swiss settlements in Ohio and Indiana other small communities have been established in recent years in Missouri, Oklahoma, and Oregon with individual settlers in many localities in the West. In re-

cent years, too, several small communities have been founded in the western states by immigrants direct from Switzerland. Among these was a small group of fourteen families who located at Pulaski, Iowa, in 1873, under the leadership of Philip Roulet, who after two years in Butler county, Ohio, had come to Iowa in 1869. This group later moved to Missouri, however, and finally to Kansas. In 1883 another group of ten families came direct from the canton of Bern to Whitewater, Kansas.

The Swiss immigrants of the earlier period, when they left their homes, packed their goods, wives and children in one-horse wagons and started out on the first five hundred mile lap of their long journey through France to Havre, where they usually sold their horses but not their wagons, and waited for the ship on which they were to take passage. A voyage across the ocean in the small sailing ships of those days was still somewhat of an uncertain and hazardous venture. One group of one hundred and seventy-five persons, in 1852, were given an entire vessel to themselves, a small cotton freighter, a three master, only one hundred and twenty-three feet long, twenty-two feet wide, with a carrying capacity of eight hundred tons. The captain, two steersmen, a cook, mate and nine sailors constituted the crew. In this frail bark they spent six weeks on the seas, a part of the time in heavy storms.

The ships usually landed at New York. Here these sturdy Swiss immigrants would again purchase a horse, which they hitched to the wagon they had brought over with them, and began another overland journey of some five hundred miles over the mountains and across the rivers of Pennsylvania to their chosen homes in the hardwood forests of Ohio, the entire journey from Switzerland to Ohio lasting usually in the early days the better part of six months.

The first settlers usually being poor, located on uncleared government land which could still be purchased at \$1.25 per acre. The first years were spent in making small clearings, and erecting the first log buildings. Farm products were cheap. The nearest market was one hundred miles away. Money was scarce. One Switzer in Wayne county, local tradition has it, at one time walked fifteen miles to the home of an Amishman for a postage stamp to send a letter home. Clothing, from straw hats to wooden shoes, was all home grown and home made. For a long time, too, the Swiss retained their strange Swiss customs—hooks and eyes, and *Swietzer Dietch*, which is still the common language of everyday conversation. Before 1854 baptism was always administered in private, never in public—a custom made necessary in the early days in Switzerland because of persecution.

In their church affiliations they remained for a long time independent from any of the American organized conferences. The Chippewa and a major part of the Sonnenberg congregation, in Wayne county, now rather affiliate with the Old Mennonites. The remaining communities in Ohio and Indiana joined the General Conference group of churches in the early nineties. In 1878 all the Swiss congregations met at Sonnenberg for a conference. The bishops present at that time were Ulrich Sommer, Christian Sommer, and Christian B. Steiner from Wayne county; John Moser from Allen county; and Christian Sprunger and Christian B. Lehman from Berne, Indiana.

The Hessian Group

In the early thirties about one hundred Hessian Mennonites from Hesse-Darmstadt, bearing such names as *Nafziger*, *Holly*, *Kennel*, *Iutze*, *Burckey*, *Jordy*, *Kistler*, *Unsicker*, etc., settled in Butler county, Ohio, near the

Amish community there. About the same time a small group located among the Amish in Waterloo county, Ontario. A little later several Hessian families moved from here to Putnam county, Illinois, and in the early fifties a congregation was also established in McLean county, Illinois, near the Rock Creek Amish settlement. In all these places, after vain attempts to affiliate with the Amish in worship, the Hessians organized separate congregations.

From Bavaria

Between 1830 and 1855 some fifty families from southern Bavaria arrived in America. Although individuals from various Bavarian congregations were included in the different groups of both Amish and Menonites who came to America during this period, yet most of them came from three congregations—Weirhof, Eichstock and Maxweiler. Maxweiler left as a body, as did most of Eichstock. The pioneer immigrant of this group, perhaps, was Jacob Krehbiel, from Weirhof, who arrived at Clarence Center, New York, near Buffalo in 1831, where a small congregation soon developed; this congregation later frequently served as a temporary stopping place for Bavarian arrivals whose destination was points farther west.

In 1833 a small settlement, started by the Krehbiels and Rissers was located in Ashland county, Ohio, which was served some years later, among a number of earlier ministers, by Carl J. van der Smissen, former principal of the Wadsworth school. The congregation is now extinct.

The chief Bavarian colonies were those in Lee county, Iowa, and Summerfield, Illinois, near St. Louis, both begun in the early forties. Later in the fifties, several groups from Bavaria augmented both settlements.

The Lee county congregation was located near Nauvoo, Illinois, at this time the center of a large colony of Mormons, who were terrorizing the scattered settlements on both sides of the Mississippi. John Miller, the first minster of the Lee county group, was murdered in 1845, by a band of Mormon robbers, which delayed the full organization of a congregation until 1849. Although the Ohio congregation became extinct in course of time, those in Illinois and Iowa have continued to the present day, and in the early sixties, became important charter members of the General Conference movement.

Among the common names of the Bavarian immigrants of the period may be mentioned *Krehbiel, Ruth, Leisy, Haury, Risser, Hirschler, Showalter, Schnebele, Rupp, Pletcher, Baer, Dester, Ellenberg, Loewenberg, Eyman*, etc.

An interesting account of the means of travel to the west in that day, as well as of its hardships is found in an account written in later years by J. E. Ruth, a member of an immigrant party of seventy-two, which arrived in Lee county in 1852. The party, which was gathered together from various congregations in Bavaria, but principally from Eichstock and Maxweiler, left their Bavarian homes in early June of that year. They sailed from Havre in a sailing vessel, a three master with a tonnage of fifteen hundred. The voyagers still carried their own provisions at this time, and had to prepare their own meals on shipboard. After a stormy passage of fifty-two days, the group landed in New York where they had to wait for five days on a steamer that was to take them up the Hudson to Albany. From here they went by train to Buffalo; and from the latter place by boat to Toledo. Here, one of their number, father Lehman, head of a family of seven, took down with cholera, which was raging through the country at the time, and in ten hours

was dead. The boat stopped long enough to bury the body along the shore.

Reaching Toledo, the party again boarded the train on the first and only railroad then running into Chicago, a little city of some fifteen thousand. This lap of the journey took two days, much of the time being spent on side tracks, waiting for freight trains to pass, freight traffic being considered more important evidently than human cargo. Not having brought sufficient food with them to last through the prolonged journey, the young men of the party were compelled occasionally during the long stops to scour the country side for provisions. One morning young Wurz and Hertzler³ presented the hungry travellers with a fresh supply of pancakes and butter milk coaxed out of a generous house wife from a farm home near by.

At Chicago, as everywhere else along the route, Ruth says, they were badly treated as "Green Dutchmen." Following their European practise, no doubt, and perhaps somewhat the demands of necessity, the women of the party took time out during their stay here to do their family washing on the shores of Lake Michigan. From Chicago the journey was continued southward by canal, the only means of travel then available in that direction to the Illinois river, thence down the river to Peoria. The original destination of the group had been Summerfield by way of St. Louis, but hearing that the cholera also was prevalent in that direction, they decided to stop off at Peoria, and from there join the Lee county settlement. Here widow Lehman left the party by special carriage for Fort Madison, Iowa. On the way, her two-year-old son died. After carrying his dead body in her arms

³ Grandfather of the well-known surgeon of Halstead, Kansas, and author of "The Horse and Buggy Doctor," a recent best seller, Dr. Arthur H. Hertzler.

for half a day, she prevailed upon the driver to stop long enough at a lonely farm home along the way to build a coffin and bury the child under a shade tree by the road side. The rest of the group left by stage for Burlington, and soon after arrived in Lee county, three months after they had left their homes in Bavaria.

The Amish Contingent

The largest group of immigrants of this period was that of the Amish, individuals here and there from Rhenish Bavaria, but largely from France—Alsace and Lorraine. The regions of the Saar, and about Montbeliard and Belfort were especially well represented.

The Amishman who led the way in this general movement was a Christian Augsburg, an Alsatian from the vicinity of Strasburg, who in the course of a land seeking tour through the Ohio valley in 1818, had occasion to come up the Miami as far as what is now Butler county. Here the next year he, with five other families, located the first pioneer Amish colony of this migration, near the present village of Trenton. A number of other families followed in the year succeeding and soon established a small congregation.

In 1832, as just indicated, a colony of Hessian Mennonites located near this early Amish settlement, and at first worshipped with them. But in course of time, insignificant though irreconcilable differences forced a separation. The Amish wore hooks and eyes, the Hessians buttons; the Amish forbade the use of musical instruments, the Hessians favored them. Other differences crept in and kept the two congregations apart for a number of years.

Being a pioneer settlement, Butler county became a convenient stopping place for a time for such later Amish

and Hessian immigrants as were headed for cheaper lands farther west, especially central Illinois. Among the early preachers who made this congregation a way station for their westward trek was Joseph Goldsmith, who, first settling in Canada, became in 1824 the first Amish minister of that colony; in 1831 he came to Butler county, where in 1838, he was ordained as a bishop in that congregation, only to move to Lee county, Iowa, in 1847, in time to help organize the first Amish congregation in that state. Another early minister was Peter Nafziger, also an immigrant to Canada in 1826, but because of the cold north, choosing, in 1831, the more hospitable climate of Butler county. Here he served as bishop of the Hessian church until 1844, when he moved with his family to central Illinois, where he died near the close of the century at the ripe old age of ninety-eight. He was sometimes called "the Apostle" because of his love of travel among the various scattered Amish settlements of his day from New Orleans, through Illinois and Ohio to Canada, much of the way frequently on horseback and occasionally by foot. From Canada, too, for a stay of only one winter, 1833 and 1834, in Butler county, came the Ropp brothers, Christian, Andrew and Jacob, who likewise preferred the cheaper lands of Illinois, where Christian later became a bishop of the churches along the Mackinaw and adjacent prairies for many of the early trying years. Finally, Joseph Stuckey, migrating with his parents from Alsace to Butler county in 1830, spent his young manhood here until 1850, when he, too, moved to the Rock Creek congregation in Illinois, where in 1860 he was ordained to the ministry to become some years later the founder of the Illinois Central Conference group of Amish-Mennonites.

The Canadian colony referred to above was the second of the European Amish settlements made during this period. The pioneer here was Christian Nafziger, a Ba-

varian who arrived in Waterloo county by way of New Orleans and Lancaster county in 1822, in search of homes for his brethren. After taking an option on a rather large tract of land in Wilmot township, right next to the Mennonite colony already established here, he returned to Europe. He was not able to return until 1826, but in the meantime, in 1824, several families had started a settlement on the lands selected. Many immigrants came in the years immediately following from Alsace, Lorraine, stragglers from Bavaria, and occasionally a Hessian, until a number of substantial settlements had been formed. Today the Amish congregations of Canada number nine, with a total population of about four thousand.⁴

In the early thirties three new Amish colonies were started, one in Lewis county, New York, another in Fulton county, Ohio, and the third in central Illinois. The New York settlement was located along the Black river, one of the branches of the Mohawk in the northwestern part of the state by settlers with such names as *Fahrni*, *Verkler*, *Nafziger*, *Ringenberg*, etc. The Amish community here today includes about five hundred members, still quite conservative.

The immigrants to Fulton county came largely from the French section about Mühlhausen, with some Alsations, and a few Swiss. The first group arrived in 1834 and soon after, with such names as *Koenig*, *Bender*, *Roth* and *Gunday*, to be followed during the next twenty years by many others. The settlement today is divided into three congregations, embracing a total membership of about thirteen hundred.

The largest of the Amish settlements of this period

⁴ The Canadian statistics here are given in terms of the entire population, the entire membership being arbitrarily multiplied by two.

was that in central Illinois. The earliest arrivals here were Alsatians by way of Butler county, Peter Maurer, who located along Rock creek, a tributary of the Mackinaw in McLean county in 1829, to be followed the next year by two others who made their journey from Ohio on foot, John Strubhar and Nicholas Maurer. In 1831 a small group of Lotharingian young people, some with their parents, arrived by way of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and the Ohio and Illinois rivers at what was then Ft. Clark, but now Peoria, a few miles below which, at Wesley City, they established the first Amish community west of Ohio. The members of this group were Jacob Auer, Peter Beck, David Schertz and his father, Joseph Rusche and two sisters, and Christian Roggi with three daughters.

During the next twenty years many others came from Alsace and Lorraine largely, locating along the timbered belts bordering the tributaries of the Illinois east of Ft. Clark—the Mackinaw, Partridge, Ten Mile, Dillon, and Bureau creek some distance farther up the river near Hennepin. In 1833 the first Amish congregation in Illinois was organized near the present village of Metamora, earlier known as Hanover, with Christian Engle, a minister ordained in Alsace, as the first preacher.

The route usually taken by the early pioneers to the Illinois country was Lancaster county, down the Ohio and up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to Peoria. Later a more direct all water route was found by way of New Orleans. For a time seemingly there was a small congregation at New Orleans.

These early colonies grew rapidly by additions from Europe until a number of substantial congregations had been established along the various well-timbered creek bottoms. The second and third generations, however, all

moved out of their original homes to the more fertile open prairies to the east, in Woodford, Livingston, Tazewell, McLean and Bureau counties. After the Civil War there were several divisions within the original church—one resulting in the formation of the Central Conference; and the other in the Defenseless Mennonites. The entire membership in Illinois of the original Amish church and their descendants in these divisions approximates some six thousand.

The Amish, as well as the Mennonite immigrants of this period, were of the same original Swiss stock as their Pennsylvania brethren of the preceding century. The Pennsylvanians were from the Palatinate, while the nineteenth century Amish came largely from the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, though the Mennonite group was largely from Bavaria, as just indicated. All were descendants, however, of the Swiss exiles of 1671 and 1710, and spoke some form of German—the Bavarians the Palatine tongue; the French in Alsace the Alsatian patois; while those from the Saar region farther inland nearer the French language frontier, spoke a language that included a number of French words and expressions. All, however, were of German origin, with practically no intermixture of native French blood.

Although of the same stock as their Pennsylvania brethren, yet the immigrants of the nineteenth century, and especially the Amish, introduced a number of new family names little known among the Pennsylvanians, chief among which, the first fourteen are given, roughly in the order of their numerical importance and all in their modern spelling: *Nafziger*,⁵ *Schertz*,⁶ *Bachman*, *Gerber*, *Stuckey*, *Schrock*, *Wagler*,⁷ *Springer*, *Augsburger*,⁸ *Gas-*

5 A common name in most of the Amish settlements.

6 Most common in central Illinois.

7 In many places *Wagner* now.

8 Common in Butler and McLean counties.

cho,⁹ *Oesch*, *Rockey*, *Rupp*,¹⁰ *Ramseyer*, *Auer*,¹¹ *Albrecht*, *Belsley*,¹² *Burckey*, *Beck*, *Bender*,¹³ *Bechler*, *Brenneman*, *Egly*, *Fahrney*, *Guth*, *Gunday*, *Gingrich*, *Gautschy*, *Heiser*, *Holly*, *Imhoff*, *Iutzi*, *Jotter*,¹⁴ *Kennel*, *Kinsinger*, *Klopfenstein*, *Kamp*, *Litwiller*, *Mosiman*, *Maurer*,¹⁵ *Neuhauser*, *Roth*, *Risser*, *Ruvenacht*, *Raber*, *Rediger*, *Ringenberg*, *Sommer*, *Smith*, *Slagel*, *Swartzentruber*, *Salzman*, *Strubhar*, *Sweitzer*, *Staley*, *Steinman*, *Slabach*, *Streit*, *Verkler*, *Wise*, *Zehr*, etc.

All these Amish brought with them their European religious practises and social customs, most of which were still decidedly conservative. Religious worship was carried on in private homes for many years; the first meeting house in Illinois being erected by the Rock Creek congregation in 1853. Hooks and eyes, and long hair and beards for the men, and aprons, old fashioned bonnets and clothes severely plain for the women were rigorously prescribed until well into the last quarter of the century. *Meidung* and *Tracht* (shunning and clothing) were two favorite topics of discussion among the older brethren in all social conversation, and among the ministers in church parleys. Everything new in religious and social practise was regarded with extreme suspicion. There is a tradition in the Partridge congregation in Illinois that in the late fifties a certain Schertz, who, instead of following his immigrant brethren out to the creek bottoms east of Peoria, decided to take up business of his own in the city, and had thus acquired a certain taste for city ways, was put out of meeting one Sunday morning because he in-

9 Found in Canada.

10 Frequently *Ropp*—common in McLean county and Fulton.

11 Now *Oyer*. Found in Illinois.

12 Common in Woodford County, Illinois.

13 Common in Canada and Butler county.

14 Now *Yoder*, found in Bureau County, Illinois, as *Ioder*, and the same as *Yoder* among the Pennsylvania Germans, and *Jotter* in Butler county.

15 Now *Moore*, and nearly extinct among the Amish.

sisted on parting his hair and wearing a starched shirt front.

By the turn of the century, however, the children's children of the early fathers had discarded the most rigid of these regulations, and had begun increasingly to associate with their more progressive Mennonite brethren, and had begun to speak of themselves as Amish-Mennonites. With the exception of the settlements in New York and Canada, these have now all affiliated with the Old Mennonites or other more progressive groups, and the name Amish is no longer known among them.

The Dutch Group

Mention should be made here also in this list of immigrant groups of a party of fifty-two Dutch Mennonites who, in 1853, left the congregation in Balk, Holland because of their opposition to war service, and their reluctance to follow their more liberal-minded fellow Dutch Mennonites in discarding other traditional Mennonite doctrines. This little party located near Elkhart, Indiana, and their descendants today form a large part of the conservative Old Mennonite congregation of Salem.

A Few Statistics

Judging entirely by the membership of the present congregations that grew out of all these early settlements made by the Amish and Mennonites throughout the country, a rough estimate of the number of arrivals of all these various groups between 1817 and 1860 would be about as follows: Amish, 1500; Swiss, 1200, Bavarian Mennonites, 250; Hessians, 150; and Dutch Mennonites, 52.

MENNONITES AS PIONEERS

The reader has already observed, no doubt, that the Mennonites and Amish have been among the pioneers in the westward march of the American frontier, and

among the very first settlers in the opening up of new lands. By founding Germantown in 1683 they not only became pioneer settlers in Pennsylvania, but established the first regular German colony in America. In 1710 they were the first whites to locate on the Conestoga, and followed hard on the heels of the Scotch-Irish hunters and traders who had blazed the way for the first permanent settlers. Before the middle of the century they had joined the first Germans to venture into the beautiful Shenandoah. In 1772 they crossed the Alleghenies to establish one of the earliest communities along the Juniata. Before the Revolution they had reached the headwaters of the Ohio in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania before that region had been vacated by the Indians.

In Ohio, they ascended the Hocking and located in what is now Fairfield county just ten years after the founding of Marietta farther down the river. In Illinois they began to clear the timber along the banks of the Illinois river in 1831, just ten years after the first log cabin had been erected in that part of the state. In 1839 they located in the southeastern part of Iowa before the raw prairies in that region had been occupied by the white man. And so, all through the west and northwest, in Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Oregon, Oklahoma and the Canadian northwest, wherever new lands have been opened up for settlement there Mennonites have been among the first to set up their log cabins and sod shanties, and always the first to establish pioneer churches.

2.

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

DIVISIONS AMONG THE MENNONITES

The Mennonites of America as well as those of Europe have been unusually susceptible to church divisions.

For this there are several reasons. In the first place the Mennonite faith has always fostered an extreme individualism. This spirit may make for strength of character, but at the expense of uniformity often. In the second place, the congregational form of church government and the lack of regular unifying conferences permitted scattered congregations to develop certain slight differences which later presented points of dispute when uniformity of action was desired for any particular purpose. Mennonites as a class were rural people, coming from the humble and simple walks of life, and not trained to subordinate non-essentials to the broader and more important interests of life. Several divisions, too, were caused by the pure stubbornness of certain self-willed individuals of a quarrelsome disposition.

At the time of the first American immigration there were two branches of the church—the Amish and the main body of Mennonites. The story of nineteenth century Amish divisions will be told later in this chapter. The immigrants among the nineteenth century Mennonites, too—Hessians, Bavarians, and Swiss—founded independent groups and for a time did not affiliate with any of the American groups, although later nearly all of them joined the General Conference movement. It remains here to speak first of the divisions among the Pennsylvania Mennonites and their descendants.

The first division in the Pennsylvania church in 1775, that led by Christian Funk over the question of paying the war tax, has already been discussed.

The Reformed Mennonites

The second division occurred in Lancaster county in 1812, resulting in the organization of what is now known as the Reformed Mennonites. The founder of this branch was John Herr, never a member of the church himself,

but the son of Francis Herr, a Mennonite minister who had been expelled from the church on the alleged ground of irregularities arising out of a business deal. Francis Herr, together with several of his friends, also ex-Mennonites, held religious meetings in his own house for some time after that. Upon his death his son, John Herr, took up his cause, and becoming "convicted of sin," attended the meetings of his father's associates. He finally had himself baptized by one of these associates, whom he in turn rebaptized, several others were added to the group, and John Herr was soon elected bishop. Thus was begun the sect which soon assumed the name of Reformed Mennonites.

In numerous controversial pamphlets written soon after, the old church was charged with being dead, corrupt and worldly. What Herr and his associates meant by these terms soon became clear by the practices they adopted soon after. In the main the fundamental doctrines of the Mennonite church were retained, but in a few questions of practise they carried their principles to extreme lengths. They are still extremely exclusive in their religious affiliations. All those not of their faith are of the "world." They refuse to attend religious services of any sort if conducted by a minister of any other faith. The Ban and Avoidance are rigidly applied. They are severely plain in their dress, and discard all unnecessary adornment in their houses or on their persons as vain or sinful. They have no Sunday Schools, do not support missions, nor evangelistic efforts. They have grown slowly, and have not even held their own children. Many of the children do not join the church of their parents, and being taught that all other churches are of the world, they frequently refuse to join any. Their stronghold is still in Lancaster county, but they have a few scattered congregations in Ohio, Illinois, Michigan

and Ontario. Their influence has been small, although in Lancaster county there was often much bitter feeling for many years between the "old" and the "new" Mennonites. The entire membership today is about seventeen hundred.

The Oberholtzer Following

The next church division, commonly known as the Oberholtzer group of churches, appeared first in the Old Franconia Conference district which included some twenty-two church congregations, principally in Bucks and Montgomery counties, Pennsylvania, with five bishops, forty ministers, and twenty-five deacons, who were wont to meet twice each year as a High Council to regulate the affairs of their churches.

The Pennsylvania churches at this time, the middle of the past century, were still quite conservative in all their religious practises and social customs. Their congregations consisted almost entirely of small farm communities, with a ministry that was uneducated and chosen by lot, clinging tenaciously to the old traditions, suspicious of the outside world, and associating very little in religious matters with the non-Mennonite community.

A glimpse of the religious conditions of that day among the Mennonites may be gleaned from a brief account written many years later by one closely in touch with the events of the period, but at the time of the writing no longer a member of any branch of the church.¹⁶

"My father was an ardent Whig, and he supported the measures that looked for the lightening of the burdens the country was under.

He attended the township primaries, the county conventions that framed the ticket, and attended political meetings, be-

16 Henry R. Hunsicker.

lieving that as a good citizen it was his duty to do so. He was waited upon by minister Eli Landis, and elder John Gotwals, warning him of having offended the rules of the meeting, assuming that such was the duty of the people of the world.

"It was about this time that linen covers on dearborns were giving way to black oilcloth covers. When my father availed himself of a black oilcloth cover for his dearborn he was charged with violating a long established custom of the Mennonites in making such a change; and when a year or so later he had elleptic springs put on the running gears of his carriage he sinned even more grievously. Then, too, came the charge that his children did not conform to the style and dress of the meeting. Though my father always wore the Mennonite garb, he laid no stress on it and allowed his boys and girls to dress like the others around them. I remember it was under discussion that my sisters wear caps at meeting, and be otherwise plain in dress. Other matters came up, such as forbidding marrying outside of the denomination, attendance at civil duties, such as voting at elections, resorting to process of law to recover property, favoring liberal education, etc. I remember a deep impression was made on me by these outside restraining influences to my ambition in striving to obtain an education, as father was charged with being worldly minded, allowing too much latitude to his children, and thus also influencing others growing up around him.

"My father was regularly ordained to the ministry New Year, 1847, some months before the split took place. My uncle, John Hunsicker, who was then bishop in the district comprising Skippack, Methacten, Providence and Zieglers (now Gotwals) died in the autumn of 1847, and my father became bishop of the above named district."

"This continued and intensified opposition by the Mennonites as referred to above, and perhaps some I have omitted, culminated in a schism or split at the conference at Franconia in May 1847, when John Hunsicker, my uncle, John H. Oberholtzer, William Landis, Israel Beidler, and my father Abraham Hunsicker, ministers ordained as Mennonites, were literally put out of Meeting for holding liberal views in advance of the Church."

Among the ministers above mentioned, the most active and influential was John H. Oberholtzer of the Swamp congregation, a young man ordained in 1842, a former school teacher, and thus perhaps somewhat better educated than his fellow ministers of an older generation. Oberholtzer was an aggressive young man, full of zeal for a more active church program; somewhat independent in spirit, and impatient of the conservative attitude of his fellow ministers. He got into trouble with his colleagues almost from the start. Being an effective speaker, he was invited frequently to hold meetings in neighboring school houses and in the non-Mennonite churches of the community by his friends and admirers, a new and unpopular practise among the Mennonites of the time. The question, however, that led directly to a break with his ministerial brethren was the cut of his clerical coat. It was a rule among the Franconia Mennonites that the minister must wear the "regulation" plain coat, which was collarless, and with rounded corners; a sort of a short frock coat, which, because of its rounded corners was sometimes known among the non-clericals as a "shad belly" coat. For some years Oberholtzer refused to wear this prescribed clerical garb. This part of his experience is perhaps best told in his own words:

"Soon after I began to preach some of the members were displeased with the way I was operating, and for different reasons. One because I did not change my coat from what it was before; some thought it unbecoming for me to wear a collar on my coat, or to have buttons on both sides. Most objections were made against the form, some contending that it ought to be round. But as the Mennonite creed did not say what form of coat the minister had to wear, in view of the Gospel I exercised my own privilege as to what would be appropriate, and continued to wear my usual dress."

This coat question remained a source of irritation

among the Franconia brethren for some years, and did not grow mellow with age. Oberholtzer had a number of sympathizers, especially in the Swamp and Skippack congregations, including his own bishop John Hunsicker. Oberholtzer stubbornly refused to wear the coat; the High Council, equally insistent, demanded that he must. Finally, in 1844, those refusing to comply with the demands of the Council were denied the right to vote at Council meetings.

This was the situation in 1847. Influenced by some of his more moderate advisers, the young preacher had by this time decided to submit to the coat regulation; but much ill will had already been aroused by the controversy, and besides, another question, too, had arisen to disturb the peace of the brotherhood. The Franconia Conference was loosely organized. It had no constitution, no set rules of procedure, no commonly accepted discipline, and it kept no records of the Council proceedings. The only rule in practise was that at the Council meetings the oldest bishop, of whom there were five, as just noted, should preside.

Oberholtzer, recognizing in this lack of organization the chief source perhaps of the arbitrary powers which enabled the majority bishops to deny the minority a hearing on their demands, now proposed that the Conference adopt a written constitution and discipline, with set rules of procedure and certain minimum agreements on religious practise; and that written records be kept of all Council sessions. In this demand he had the support of his own hishop, John Hunsicker. In a preliminary gathering, preceding the regular Spring meeting of the High Council, such ministers and deacons as agreed with Oberholtzer, some thirteen in number, approved a prospective constitution prepared by him, and to be presented to the Council for their consideration.

But when the document was presented on the following day to the High Council it was refused by majority vote even a reading. The minority group then petitioned that it might be printed and presented at the next regular Fall meeting of the Council. This petition, too, was arbitrarily refused, whereupon bishop John Husicker, with perhaps equal arbitrary impatience, declared "This is partisanship. It will be printed nevertheless."

And it was. Throughout the summer, no doubt, most of the ministers of the district had occasion to read the proposed constitution and familiarize themselves with its contents. But in the Fall meeting the minority group, now grown to sixteen, instead of listening to the reading of their favorite plan of organization, found themselves instead summarily and arbitrarily expelled from meeting by the bishops of the majority group, for having subscribed to the ill-fated document, comforted only by the promise of reinstatement to their former status within the Conference upon confession of their errors.

Several weeks later, October 28, 1847, the minority group met again in the Skippack church with Abraham Hunsicker as chairman, and J. H. Oberholtzer as secretary, to organize what soon became the East Pennsylvania District of Mennonites.

This is the story as it is told in the controversial literature of the time. But the source of the quarrel lay deeper than in a difference of opinion about the cut of a coat, or the wisdom of adopting a written constitution. It will be observed that the questions in dispute did not concern themselves with fundamental Mennonite doctrines. Mennonite quarrels never do. The new party did not differ from the old in its belief in adult baptism, non-resistance, opposition to the oath, rejection of secret societies, and for a time even in the retention of foot-washing. The chief distinction lay rather in a more tol-

erant attitude of the "News," as they were called by the "Olds," toward the non-Mennonite world, both political and religious. Among the more liberal practises sanctioned by the former in the course of a few years were the use of the courts in "a just cause," removal of all dress restrictions among both clergy and laity, a supported, and a little later an educated ministry, open communion, and outside marriages. Footwashing was soon made optional, and finally abandoned altogether.

The Oberholtzer following were among the first Mennonites also to adopt progressive methods of church work, and to espouse new religious causes. Oberholtzer himself, as early as 1847, had gathered the young people of his church on Sunday afternoons for religious instruction, and by so doing is to be credited perhaps with starting one of the first religious schools among the American Mennonites. The first official so-called Sunday School among the group, was organized in the Flatland church in 1853. The Swamp congregation also about this time introduced perhaps the first organ in worship among the Mennonites of America. By 1865 a missionary society had been organized. In 1852 Oberholtzer founded the first American Mennonite religious paper, *Religioeser Botschafter*.

The new movement affected approximately a third of the membership of the Franconia Conference district. It claimed a majority in six of the congregations, including Skippack and the two Swamps. In these the old party erected new meeting houses. In a number of congregations the two parties worshipped in the same house on alternate Sundays.

Could this division have been avoided? Yes, with a little more tolerance on the one hand, and a bit more of patience on the other. As to whether or not the separation furthered the cause of progress among the Mennon-

ites as a whole is a question on which not all would agree. It may be well to remember, too, that divisions are not always an unmitigated evil. They were not in the days of Martin Luther, nor of Menno Simons. As a matter of fact, in all movements that make for progress the majority has usually been wrong.

The East Pennsylvania District did not make much numerical growth after its initial appearance. In fact there were several divisions within the division.

The Hunsicker Faction

The charter members did not all agree on the extent of the progressive movement. To the ultra-liberal Abraham Hunsicker, above mentioned, and his son Henry, the latter of whom had also recently been ordained to the ministry, the tolerant views of Oberholtzer were not quite tolerant enough. Together with a small group of sympathizers, the Hunsickers were especially opposed to the restriction against secret societies. For their attitude on this question a number of the latter, scattered about through the different congregations, were expelled from the new conference. These in turn then organized several small centers of worship, which had only a temporary existence, however. In course of time the Hunsicker following disintegrated, and the membership was absorbed by several other denominations.

The Johnson People

But while the Hunsickers found the Oberholtzer church too conservative, another group under the leadership of Henry G. Johnson thought it too liberal. As already noted the question of footwashing was a matter of frequent discussion in the early sessions of the conference; and when in the Spring session of 1858 it was

officially declared that the rite was no longer to be regarded as a binding ordinance, the Johnson party withdrew from the conference and established another independent religious organization. There are still several independent Johnson congregations in the district.

William Gehman and the Prayer Meeting Controversy

But the end was not yet. Another disturbing question in certain Mennonite circles of the time was that of prayer meetings, and the need of a more highly emotional religious life than that prevailing in the church at large. William Gehman, a newly ordained minister in the Upper Milford congregation, began to hold private prayer meetings with an inner circle of adherents soon after his ordination. The movement soon attracted rather general attention, sufficient to merit conference notice. In 1853 the new conference after investigating the innovation, and seeing no possible harm in prayer meetings, sanctioned them. But several years later as a result of general dissatisfaction caused by an excessive emotionalism being manifested by the prayer group in their meetings, and the assumption by them of a piety superior to that of the non-participating group, the conference reversed its decision, and declared that although it favored the spirit and practise of prayer in all religious meetings held by members and ministers in regular worship, yet it discouraged special meetings held for prayer only, and the cultivation of intense emotionalism as then carried on. Gehman and his followers refused to abide by the advice, with the result that in 1858 he and twenty-two others were dismissed from the conference. Soon after, this group organized another small wing of the church, under the name of *Evangelical Mennonites*.

The Evangelical Mennonites had a slow growth. By 1880 they numbered only one hundred and seventy-five

members. Later, however, through amalgamation with several other small Mennonite offshoots similarly minded, from various part of the United States and Canada, they developed in course of time into a body of substantial size.

To say that Gehman and his following were expelled from the East Pennsylvania District conference for holding prayer meetings does not tell the whole story. The Oberholtzer churches did not oppose prayer either privately or publicly in connection with the regular service of worship; nor in special meetings if properly conducted and kept within bounds. That there was considerable of unwholesome emotionalism connected with these meetings as conducted, and danger of overemphasis of them as an essential adjunct to the regular forms of religious service is suggested by a letter written by Daniel Hoch of Canada to Oberholtzer about this time. Hoch, too, at the Twenty had succumbed to the prayer meeting movement of the time, though he evidently kept it within sane bounds. In the letter in question Hoch regrets the fact that Oberholtzer, who had occasionally visited the former, had not been seen in Canada for some time; and asks whether he has been detained by fear of prayer meetings, immersion, or hand clapping and shouting, the latter of which, Hoch suggests, seems to him also to be the result of fanaticism.

It should be remembered here that the Mennonites as a whole were never given over to much emotionalism in their religious worship. They took their religion seriously as a normal growth, sometimes as a matter of fact perhaps. Children were taught the faith of the fathers, and in the ways of the church. In course of years as a result of parental example and catechetical instruction most of them arrived at a state of realization of the need of a personal Savior in their lives. Worship consisted of more or less formal services, and no attempts were made

to stir the depths of individual religious feeling. In the main, Mennonite religious convictions were sincere and deep and abiding.

On the other hand there were always those, a few of them, who were more emotionally inclined, who were moved more by their hearts than their heads, and who longed for a more definite and intense religious experience based on a more definite conviction of sinfulness than that demanded by the larger group. These, under the influence of an unstable leadership frequently, craved prayer meetings and other surface outlets for their surplus religious feeling. The difference between the two groups was not one of religion, but of psychology.

The Holdeman Faction

In 1858 John Holdeman, a layman in the Old Mennonite church of Wayne county, Ohio, ambitious to preach, but despairing of being called to the ministry through the uncertain chances of the lot, decided to preach without the conventional call. He pretended to be guided in his course of action by visions and dreams in one of which he claimed to find a call to preach. He therefore began to hold meetings in his own house, and secured a few followers including members of his own family. Like Herr before him, he took up his pen in defense of his own views and became a prolific writer. The old church he maintained had departed from the truth, and his own congregation was now the true church of God, which had maintained the lineage of the saints from the days of the Apostles. His own small following which he now called the "Church of God in Christ" grew slowly in numbers. By 1865 his congregation consisted of but twenty members. It has since grown, however, especially in Manitoba, Kansas, and other western states among the Russian Mennonites. The present membership is about twenty-seven hundred.

They differ little from other Mennonites in their fundamental beliefs. Among the distinctive features introduced by Holdeman was objection to the "taking of usury," and the "laying on of hands" after baptism. Taking of usury, or interest, however, is easily side-stepped today by other ingenious ways of getting value received for money lent.

The Wisler Mennonites

The next division began in the Yellow Creek congregation in Elkhart county, Indiana. Among the pioneer settlers in this community was Bishop Jacob Wisler from Ohio, a man devoted to the principles of the church, but exceedingly conservative by nature, and opposed to the introduction of all new things, such as English preaching, four part singing, Sunday Schools, evening meetings, protracted meetings, etc. In fact every slightest departure from the ways of the fathers was placed under the ban by Wisler and a considerable part of his congregation. A number of the more progressive members of the congregation, however, under the leadership of Daniel Brenne-man, a fellow minister, demanded a more progressive policy. This Wisler opposed, and threatened with excommunication those who advocated the introduction of the new methods of church work. Finally the latter's arbitrary method of enforcing his views resulted in a church trial in 1870, in which Wisler was deprived of his office. He and those who believed as he did then organized a new congregation.

The same attempts to keep the church within narrow bounds were made by other ultra-conservative men in other sections of the country. All of these finding themselves weak in number, but akin in faith, finally affiliated themselves into one body. The first contingent to join Wisler's group was a band of conservatives in Medina

county, Ohio. A little later, in 1886, several groups of conservatives in Woolwich township, Waterloo county, Ontario, opposing English preaching, Sunday schools, evening meetings, "falling" top-buggies, and other evidences of modernism among the Mennonites of that community, withdrew from the church and set up a separate organization. These Woolwichers as they are locally called, soon allied themselves with the Indiana Wislerites. A second group was led by Bishop Jonas Martin of the Weaverland congregation in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, who in 1893 because of a quarrel over a new pulpit recently installed into his church, withdrew from the church, and posing as a conservative on other questions retained one-third of his former congregation. The third group consisted of a conservative Virginia congregation in Rockingham county of about one hundred members which allied itself with the "Martinites" of Pennsylvania.

These four original groups of *Wislerites*, *Woolwichers*, and Pennsylvania and Virginia *Martinites* now count up all told about sixteen hundred members throughout Indiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Michigan, and Ontario. They are all still ultra-conservative in dress, forms of worship, and social customs and are very slow to adopt new ideas. With the exception that they do not wear hooks and eyes nor the home made coats they are similar to the Old Order Amish in their general spirit, and might well be called the *Old Order Mennonites*.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ¹⁷

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ branch of the church is the result of a series of amalgamations of four small kindred groups, three of which had seceded from

¹⁷ Not to be confused with the Mennonite Brethren among the Russians (Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde).

the parent body for similar reasons, namely a more evangelistic and emotional type of religious life.

One of these groups, the *Evangelical Mennonites*, has just been mentioned. Two of them had their origin in Canada. *New Mennonites* was the name assumed by a group of Canadian Mennonites, who, during the middle of the past century under the leadership of Daniel Hoch, an aggressive minister in the Twenty congregation, had been expelled from the church in 1848 by bishop Benjamin Eby for advocating and practising special evangelistic and prayer meetings contrary to the regular religious worship practise of the church at large. Hoch, himself although at first one of the leaders of this group, did not follow the rest in the series of unions which finally ended with the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. He remained closely affiliated with the Oberholtzer group in Pennsylvania, and was one of the participants in the movement that finally resulted in the formation of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, of which he remained a member throughout his life.

*Reformed Mennonites*¹⁸ was the name applied to a group of former members of the old church that had one root of its origin in Bruce county, Ontario, and the other in Elkhart county, Indiana. Solomon Eby, who had been chosen by lot to the ministry in the Port Elgin congregation in 1858, but according to his own testimony had not been "happily converted" until 1869, was also expelled from the main body for countenancing methods of worship unknown to the usual practise of the church. Eby had a number of followers throughout the different Canadian settlements. About the same time, too, Daniel Brenneman of the Yellow Creek congregation in Indiana, had likewise been put out of meeting by the Indiana

¹⁸ Not to be confused with the earlier Pennsylvania Reformed Mennonites, followers of John Herr.

bishops for sponsoring a more aggressive evangelistic work in his community than was thought wise by his ministering brethren. After making several visits to Canada where a spirited revival movement was in progress among the Eby people, Brenneman and his following decided in 1874 to join their Canadian brethren in the formation of an organization called the Reformed Mennonites.

The fourth contingent of this combination was the *Brethren in Christ*, who as early as 1838 had seceded from the River Brethren, who in turn had originally sprung from the Mennonite body in the preceding century.

These four small bodies, all with a more or less direct Mennonite origin, and with similar beliefs and practises, by a series of amalgamations united to form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ church of today. The first union occurred in Waterloo county, Ontario when in 1875 the New and the Reformed Mennonites joined their forces under the name of United Mennonites. In 1879 the *United Mennonites* consolidated with the Pennsylvania Evangelical Mennonites to form the *Evangelical United Mennonites*. The unification movement was completed when at Jamton, Ohio, in 1883 the latter were joined by the *Brethren in Christ* to form the *Mennonite Brethren in Christ*.

This branch of the church still holds to practically all of the characteristic doctrines and practises of the parent branch of the denomination including non-resistance, opposition to the oath, secret societies and life insurance, footwashing, and plain though not necessarily a peculiar and set cut of clothing. But, stressing as they do the necessity of a very definite sense of conversion and a decided conviction of sin, as well as a certain assurance of salvation as a condition of church membership, they play up very strongly the emotional side of their religious

experiences in their public worship. Conversion, sometimes accompanied with great joy but more often achieved through intense agony, is an important event in their lives, and is given a definite date with birth and death in all their obituaries.

They sponsor frequent prayer meetings, evangelistic efforts, itinerant preaching, "protracted meetings," and old fashioned camp meetings. Preachers are recruited through a definite "call", and are not selected by the lot as among the old Mennonites. They were the first and thus far still almost the only branch of the church to admit women to the pulpit. In their revivals and camp meetings they are still inclined to give free play to their feelings of both joy and agony. The following item taken from a rather recent report to the church paper of a Michigan camp meeting gives us a glimpse of a rather common technique used in breaking the will of a stubborn sinner, as well as a possible reason for the disfavor with which the new church was regarded in its early history by the more formal and stable Mennonites of the old order. Speaking of a revival that had continued for four weeks before there were any signs of a break, the writer reports that

"One sister fought the idea of being a Mennonite and washing feet, but God held her to it, and when she became willing God poured out His spirit upon her, and after lying on the floor for over an hour she came out with cries of 'Glory! Glory!' and, 'I'm sanctified.' The meetings continued for seven weeks. In all, twenty-nine seekers came out, and all but three claimed victory; others were under conviction but would not yield."

In the course of time, too, as a result of the amalgamation of these different groups, each with certain distinct practises the Mennonite Brethren in Christ have adopted a number of practises and doctrines not general among

other Mennonite groups—sanctification, second work of grace, second coming, holiness, open communion, immersion and so on. Like other highly emotional religions, they have frequently been subjected to unwholesome and fanatical movements such as the Speaking of Tongues illusion, and other religious fads equally as spiritually unhealthy.

No other branch of the denomination has reached out into non-Mennonite fields so far for its membership as have the Mennonite Brethren. Few of the additions since the early years have come from Mennonite sources. Many of their present congregations started as mission stations in both city and country districts. For this reason one finds fewer characteristic Mennonite names in their membership lists than among any of the other branches, most of the latter being entirely of a long Mennonite ancestry. This fact has brought with it certain problems. Many of the traditional and historical Mennonite beliefs and practices are not as easily accepted by those who have not inherited them as by those who have had a long Mennonite ancestry. During the late war the doctrine of non-resistance was much more difficult to maintain in Canada and Michigan where there was a large element of non-Mennonite ancestry than in Indiana and Pennsylvania where the opposite was true.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ are among the best organized of all the branches of the church, being semi-episcopal instead of congregational in their church polity. The highest administrative officials are presiding elders elected annually over districts or conferences. Ministers are licensed to preach upon satisfactory evidence that they have a definite call to that service. The *Gospel Banner*, founded in 1878 by Daniel Brenneman in Goshen, Indiana, and according to a recent announcement a "full salvation" and "premillennial periodical", is still the official

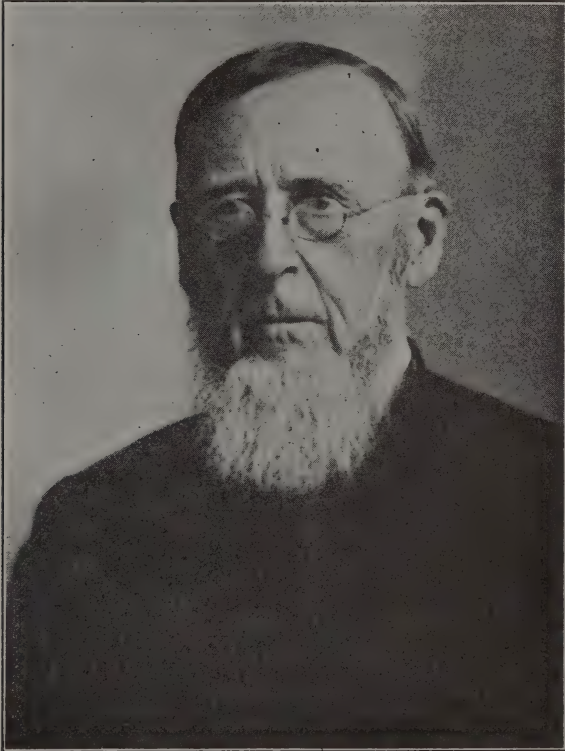
organ of the church. There are seven conference districts. The entire membership today throughout Canada and the United States is approximately ten thousand, distributed mainly through Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan and Ontario.

The Old Mennonites

The list of divisions above described leaves the main trunk of the American Mennonites who in this treatise for convenience are called *Old Mennonites*. The leaders of this branch of the church object to the prefix "old", and insist that since they are the main body from which all the others departed they are entitled to the simple term "Mennonite" on the ground that they are the real descendants of the church founded by Menno Simons. Organically and numerically they are perhaps entitled to this distinction, but since a writer must adopt some method of distinguishing different groups either by name or number this larger body is here referred to as Old Mennonites. They speak of themselves officially, however, simply as Mennonites. To make the confusion worse this branch, together with the Amish-Mennonites are now affiliated in a General Conference, which is sometimes confused in the literature with the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America. To distinguish between the two the latter is sometimes referred to when both are under consideration as *General Conference A*, while the former is *General Conference B*. These titles are merely for convenience and are not official.

The Old Mennonites, almost exclusively of Pennsylvania origin, are still by far the largest branch of the denomination numerically. Their Year Book for 1937 gives their entire membership as fifty-five thousand, less than four thousand of whom are found in Canada. They

were but slightly affected seemingly in their religious practises by the various divisions above described. It was not until well toward the close of the past century that they showed any appreciable interest in a more progressive church program. As in progressive movements generally, the Old Mennonites owe their enlightenment to a



John F. Funk

few far seeing leaders. Among these, first place should be given to John F. Funk, a young Bucks county Pennsylvania Dutchman, who entered Chicago a short time

before the Civil War to engage in the lumber business. Becoming interested, however, in religious work, he soon abandoned his first plans and established a publishing enterprise instead for the special benefit of the Mennonite reading public. In 1864 he founded the *Herald of Truth*, and its counterpart in German, the *Herold der Wahrheit*, which though privately owned was dedicated to the cause of the Mennonite church. A few years later, Funk moved his printing establishment to Elkhart, Indiana, where it was finally known as the Mennonite Publishing Company, though still privately owned. For the next fifty years the Publishing Company furnished not only the Old Mennonites but many of the other groups, much of their religious literature, including translations of the voluminous works of Menno Simons, and the big *Martyrs Mirror*, the two church papers already mentioned, Sunday school supplies, hymn books, various other religious tracts and books of a distinctive denominational character. Needless to say this Publishing Company together with the first city congregation in the Mennonite church that arose out of it at Elkhart, became a vital force in promoting progressive church work throughout the entire denomination.

Both church papers persistently advocated the cause of Sunday schools, missions, evangelistic efforts and other progressive church enterprises when a majority of the Old Mennonite congregations were still decidedly suspicious of the slightest departure from the religious ways of the fathers. Progressive church leaders here and there also found the pages open for the expression of their individual views on these and other vital questions.

Not the least of the contributions made by the Publishing Company to the cause of Mennonite progress was the bringing together at Elkhart of some of the brightest and most aggressive young men from the various congre-

gations as employees in one capacity or another of the company. The Elkhart congregation for a while was the cultural center of the Old Mennonite church.

Among these young men was a young Virginia school teacher and preacher by the name of John S. Coffman, who was brought to Elkhart as assistant editor of the *Herald of Truth*. Coffman, who was a young man of unusual charm, of an attractive personality and an amiable disposition, with high ideals, an able speaker, well versed in the use of the English language at a time when German was still largely in vogue in the Old Mennonite pulpits of the middle west, better educated than most of the Mennonite ministers of his day, and sincerely devoted to his church, did not confine himself to the editorial desk, but early in the eighties and nineties visited numerous congregations both in the United States and in Ontario to hold some of the first evangelistic meetings in this particular branch of the church. Young people especially were greatly attracted by the winning personality of this unusual preacher; and everywhere he went, a new interest was aroused in more progressive church work; and talented young men here and there were influenced to dedicate their lives to a career of usefulness in the mission field, in the school room, and the ministry.

Among others of the younger generation who ably supported Coffman at this time in these efforts were a number of former school teachers for the most part, the only vocation open to the Old Mennonite young men at that time outside of the farm, Daniel D. Miller, and Jonas S. Hartzler of northern Indiana; John Blosser, M. S. Steiner, C. K. Hostetler, and a few others of northwestern Ohio, who had been introduced to intellectual pursuits by a few terms at a private normal school at near-by Ada; Abram B. Kolb of Ontario, who was early added to the

editorial staff at Elkhart and later became Funk's son-in-law; and Daniel Kaufman, of Missouri, now the editor of the Gospel Herald.

These were among the chief promoters of the various church enterprises during this period. The first of the new ventures of general interest was a series of Sunday school conferences in the early nineties held alternately in Indiana and Ohio for several years, to be followed later by state conferences. It was at these meetings that the young people of the church were given their first chance to take part and express their views on various phases of church activity. The same year that saw the first of these meetings also witnessed the founding of the first mission station in Chicago with M. S. Steiner as superintendent, and the establishing of a *Young People's Paper* sponsored by the Mennonite Publishing Company. The first foreign mission station in India followed in 1898. The interest in higher education, too, occupied increasing attention. In 1895 Coffman, Hartzler and a number of other public spirited Mennonites from Northern Indiana formed a school association to take over a private normal school founded at Elkhart the year before, and called the *Elkhart Institute*, and convert it into an academy and Bible school to "provide a higher education for our young people without exposing them to the dangerous influences surrounding so many of the schools of our country."¹⁹

From this time on the interest of the Old Mennonites, especially in the middle west, in education, missions, evangelism, philanthropic and other church efforts has maintained a steady growth.

Along side of the progressive movement above described there developed also a growing demand for a closer cooperation of the various congregations and district conferences of both the Old Mennonites and the

¹⁹ Now Goshen College.

Amish-Mennonites, the latter of which in the meantime had given up their own separate distinct conferences and had united with the Mennonite organization, thus giving up the name Amish-Mennonite altogether. This goal was reached when at Wakarusa, Indiana, in 1898 the first General Conference of such of the Old Mennonite congregations as wished to join was held, subject to a call of the previous year of a number of church leaders of both the Old Mennonites and Amish-Mennonites for a meeting of "the congregations of the United States and Canada comprising the sixteen or more conferences represented by the Herald of Truth."²⁰ This was the General Conference B already referred to, and not to be confused with the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America (General Conference A) to be described in a subsequent chapter.

This General Conference movement among the Old Mennonites has not yet succeeded in interesting all the local districts. The Lancaster and Franconia conferences and the Virginia Mennonites, comprising nearly one-half the membership of this entire branch have not yet officially joined the movement, though individual members of all three frequently appear on the General Conference programs and take an active part in the deliberations.

Although the Old Mennonites in the main have adopted a rather progressive program of church activities, they still remain quite conservative in upholding many of the traditional religious and social practises and customs of by gone days. The *Dordrecht Confession of Faith* of 1632 remains their official statement of doctrines. Foot-washing is retained and the women's prayer-head covering is prescribed. Women are required to wear bon-

²⁰ The *Herald of Truth* stood for the traditional and conventional Mennonite doctrines; and in the absence of any common ecclesiastical organization, it easily served as a basis for a united religious effort among like-minded Mennonites.

nets instead of hats, and east of the Alleghenies also capes. Men are urged, but not required to wear the plain coat; in some regions in the extreme east and west, neckties have occasionally been put under suspicion; men are universally beardless, but the mustache is absolutely forbidden.²¹ On the forbidden list also is the wearing of jewelry or other unnecessary ornaments. Musical instruments in church service are not tolerated.

In recent years, perhaps because of the constant encroachment of the outside social world upon the hitherto protected closed Mennonite communities, the leaders of the church are increasingly stressing the importance of a new doctrine which is almost assuming the importance of a fundamental tenet of faith — the doctrines of *Non-conformity*, which the editor of the church paper recently defined as

“a Scriptural doctrine requiring a separation between the church and the world. Believers having accepted Christ as their personal Savior have thereby renounced their former adherence to the world with its sinful lusts and follies, and are, therefore, not to be conformed to the world in business methods, in political affiliations, in methods of living, in dress, etc., their attitude being described in the language of inspiration as ‘unspotted from the world.’”

This attitude, it will be observed, would isolate the Mennonites entirely from the rest of the religious world, almost entirely from the social world, and would permit only a minium of intercourse with the business world. The large compact settlements in Pennsylvania and Virginia are much more seclusive in this respect than the

²¹ The traditional explanation usually given for the opposition among Mennonites to the wearing of the mustache is that in certain parts of Europe it came into common use among the soldiers, and thus acquired a military significance that was objectionable to the non-resistant Mennonites. The Quakers seemingly also shared this feeling.

congregations of the middle west. In fact, as already noted, these eastern conferences are still suspicious of the orthodoxy of the western brethren in their own branch of the church, and do not officially fraternize with them. A few samples of the interference on the part of the church in the religious and business life of their members, taken from the recent disciplines of the ultra-conservative Franconia and Lancaster conferences may be of interest here.

The Franconia discipline forbids on pain of church censure outside marriage; membership or participation in secret societies; life insurance, labor unions, farmers unions, fairs, excursions, picnics, surprise parties, moving pictures, shows, political meetings, parks, exhibitions, horse races, baby shows, and the like; and also forbids members to convey people to places of amusement which they themselves are forbidden to attend. Cooperation with breeders, milk and poultry associations is also discouraged.

On the other hand, in the interest of standards of honesty too much neglected in the world today, members are urged to pay all their just obligations; and not to take advantage of exemptions and bankruptcy laws that might permit them to evade the payment of their honest debts.

Equally sensible is the recommendation to the church leaders that they confine themselves in their teaching to "essentials relative to the welfare of the church, and not to speculate on unfulfilled prophecy as the doctrine of the Millenium, and the doctrine of Eternal Security."

To this list of social taboos, the Lancaster discipline adds several others, including literary societies; choral, quartette, duet or solo singing in churches or any public gathering; protracted meetings without the consent of

the *Bench*²²; performing of wedding ceremonies by some one other than the presiding bishop²³; wedding marches and flower girls; and Sunday school libraries unless selected by some one authorized by the conference, and then to be free of fiction. The following dress regulation, though perhaps a bit severe yet in these days of feminine nudism has much to commend it: "a plain dress is made of plain goods full to the neck, the sleeves long to the wrist, the skirts to be long enough to be modest in every way, the waistline to be properly observed and retained. The cape must not be omitted; transparent goods can not be used in making plain dresses. Fancy colored stockings must not be worn."^{21a}

Most of the regulations listed in the disciplines above mentioned are quite literally carried out in the Pennsylvania conferences.

Non-conformity is especially applicable to religious association. The Old Mennonites have practically no re-

22 The *Bench* in Lancaster county came to signify the Board of Bishops.

23 The Lancaster and Franconia congregations were grouped into a number of districts presided over by bishops. The term bishop as used among the Mennonites is somewhat misleading. It does not carry with it the ecclesiastical powers of government the term implied in other denominations. A "bishop" may be such over one congregation only, and more frequently than not such is the case among the scattered congregations farther west. The term in German is *Voellige Diener*, minister with full power, that is full power to perform all necessary religious functions, such as performing marriage ceremonies, administering communion, ordaining other ministers, etc., powers denied among the Mennonites to the ordinary preacher (*Diener zum Buch*). The bishop even in Lancaster county is not likely to have jurisdiction over more than a half dozen congregations.

21a Mennonites, Amish and Dunkards in Pennsylvania are often spoken of as the "plain" people because of their plain clothes. Among the Lancaster county Mennonites the phrase "turning plain" is synonymous with joining church. Unlike the Amish, the Mennonites do not insist that their children wear plain clothes before they become church members.

ligious affiliation with even the other branches of the denomination, though they have cooperated most generously in relief work during the past years, and they do join other groups when necessary to present a united front to the governing authorities in behalf of their common peace principles. This is the limit, however, of their affiliation.

The official attitude of this entire branch of the church is well stated in an article entitled *Living Issues* appearing in the *Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary*, written by the editor of the Gospel Herald, and representing the conservative and ruling element in the church. Among the "stirring" and "important" issues before the church are the following:

Spiritual life, as distinguished from mere church membership. Christian orthodoxy, as opposed to liberalism. A free ministry, as opposed to a salaried system. Separation between Church and State; between Church and the world. Freedom from the unequal yoke with unbelievers. Non-resistance, or peace as opposed to carnal warfare. Organized secretism. Labor unionism. The insurance problem. The dress question. The amusement heresy. Evangelism and missionary activities.²⁴ Church federation vs. Christian unity.²⁵ Scriptural discipline. Eschatology.²⁶

Ministers are still chosen by lot from the congregation; most of them have had no special preparation for their work, and serve without pay. There is a growing de-

24 The Old Mennonites of course are strongly in favor of missions. The problem here stated is no doubt one of insufficient interest in the cause.

25 There is no strong movement in this branch of the church for union with other groups except perhaps on the basis of Old Mennonite principles and customs without the least compromise.

26 Fanatical millenarianism and eternal security and similar fads, no doubt, are meant here; but this branch of the church has been unusually free from such unwholesome influences.

mand, however, for a better trained ministry, and with this demand will come the necessity of some degree of financial support.

There are evidences especially in the middle west that some of these severe restrictions upon the social and business life of the membership are being gradually modified in the interests of greater toleration. Dress regulations especially are getting to be hard to enforce. Formerly, in the horse and buggy days, when large compact Mennonite communities formed not only a closed social and religious group but also a complete educational and almost a self-sufficing economic unit, there was not much need for any outside contacts. Distinct beliefs, and customs, forms of dress and a strange language were not hard to maintain. But with the coming of rural delivery, the telephone, automobile, radio and especially the rural high school the world crept in and the old time isolation was no longer possible. Young people in high school do not want to be conspicuous. Most of the dress regulations especially among the young people have been accepted under protest. With the passing of dress peculiarities and other social taboos a long step, too, will be taken in the direction of a closer religious affiliation between the various groups, and no doubt a new alignment into perhaps two or three groups on the real issue of religious liberalism and conservatism rather than on the basis of superficial peculiarities and customs.

The Old Mennonites today have their own publishing house which issues numerous books, Sunday school supplies, and several religious periodicals including the Gospel Herald with a subscription list of over ten thousand; an active Mission board; a number of local old peoples homes, several sanitariums; one college, Goshen College, and two junior colleges, Hesston, Kansas, and Eastern Mennonite school in Virginia.

THE TROUBLES OF THE AMISH

The Amish wing of the church also had its religious troubles during this period. Up to the middle of the century the whole Amish brotherhood, both the Pennsylvania contingent and the more recent Alsatian immigrants, although they were not united by any conference bonds, yet felt themselves to be one body in faith and practise. On both sides of the Atlantic their common traditions and practises had been preserved by their conservatism, so that when the Alsations migrated to America near the middle of the century they found themselves perfectly in accord with their brethren who had come to Pennsylvania a hundred years earlier. They both still stressed particularly the religious doctrine that had caused their separation from the Mennonites in Switzerland in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the doctrine of "Meidung" which they still applied rigorously as a disciplinary measure.

They wore the same clothes, the same cut of hair, and manifested the same spirit of suspicion toward everything new in the way of personal or house adornment as they appeared, every household convenience and farm appliance which characterized their Swiss and German fore-fathers of the early eighteenth century.

Meeting houses were just coming in, and only a few had been erected by the more isolated and progressive communities by this time. Services were held in individual homes in the community, in the house in winter, and in the capacious barns in the summer time. Worship lasted for several hours, and ended with a common meal at the home of the host. The preachers of course were untrained and unpaid, and elected by lot for life or good behavior. The hymns, long drawn out, sung to melodies never committed to print, and perhaps several hundred

years old, were from the Ausbund, *das dicke Liederbuch*. More than one part singing or with notes was strictly forbidden. The language in use was some sort of German, Pennsylvania Dutch among the Pennsylvanians and Alsatian or Bavarian dialect among the more recent immigrants.

In spite of their ultra conservatism which preserved the fundamentals of their faith without much change, yet as a result of their loose organization, their scattered settlements in the pre-railroad days, and sometimes pure personal perverseness, slight differences in practise developed. These differences though very slight to an impartial observer, yet were taken very seriously by these conservative, unlettered farmer preachers.

By 1850 the Amish brotherhood throughout various communities began to be stirred by the general feeling of unrest then commonly prevailing throughout the religious life of the country. In Mifflin county, Pennsylvania some Amishman, a bit more independent in his thinking than the average of his people, conceived the idea that baptism by sprinkling in a house was un-Scriptural, but that the rite should be administered by sprinkling in a flowing stream outside. He gained a few followers in his own congregation, and soon the movement spread into other communities. In Butler county, Ohio, the recently established Hessian church had imported a piano, an unheard of innovation among the American Amish of that day. The large ultra-conservative community in Holmes county, Ohio, found their Wayne county brethren entirely too worldly. In the words of a Holmes county pamphleteer written in 1860:

“es wurde nicht fuer gut order notwendig angesehen dasz die Diener in dem Abrath gehen. Und es wurde zu zeiten Rat gehalten bei offnen Thueren in der Gegenwart von auswaertigen Personen. Die alten dicken Liederbuechern wur-

den verworfen und die Springwiesen eingefuehrt. Auch die Gebetbuecher brauchten sie nicht mehr. Bann und Meidung wurden selten geuebt. Hochmut, Pracht und Uebermut nahm ueberhand. Es hiesz es kommt nicht auf das aueserliche an, wenn nur ihr Herz gut ist. Die Haeuser wurden praechtig ausgeziert. Alles das und noch viel mehr von solcher art entstand durch den obengemeldeten J. Yoder und seinen Anhang."

There were differences of opinion also between the Elkhart and Lagrange county, Indiana, communities.

It was for the purpose of harmonizing these various disagreements and for bringing about a closer cooperation among various communities that a general conference was called of all the Amish congregations in the United States and Canada. The first session in this series was held in a capacious barn in Wayne county in 1862, at which seventy-two ministers were present from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Annual sessions were held for twelve years ending in Eureka, Illinois, in 1878, without accomplishing the purpose for which the conferences were originally called.

In the meantime the various Amish communities throughout the country had become crystallized into several permanent factions. On the one hand the congregations in McLean county, and the Hessian congregation in Butler county, both of which had discarded some of their severe dress regulations and otherwise assumed a somewhat more tolerant attitude toward other liberal church practises, losing interest in the conference, ceased to attend the later sessions, and began an independent church career. On the other hand, a goodly number of the extreme conservatives also withdrew their support; and, together with such as never had favored the conference idea in the start, maintained the good old customs of the fathers without the least modification. These have since been known as the *Old Order*. Between these two

extremes were left a considerable number of congregations, including nearly all of the Alsatian immigrant communities, and the Wayne, Champaign and Logan county Pennsylvanians,^{26a} which occupied a middle position, following a fairly moderate course of religious practise and later, assumed the name of *Amish-Mennonite*. These later merged with the Old Mennonites and as already noted ceased their separate existence.

The Central Conference of Mennonites

The *Central Conference Mennonites*, locally known for a long time among the other groups in Illinois as the *Stuckey Amish*, had their origin in the Rock Creek congregation in McLean county, Illinois. The bishop here was Joseph Stuckey, one of the promising young leaders of the entire Amish church. He was a man of strong personality, a writer of some ability, and talented with more than ordinary organizing power. Being rather more liberal minded on religious questions than most of his fellow ministers, he occasionally was brought into friction with other leaders even before 1870, the time his troubles began with the Conference above mentioned. About this time a dispute arose between Stuckey and the Conference relative to the expulsion of a liberal minded member of the former's congregation by the name of Joseph Yoder. The Conference ordered Yoder's excommunication on the ground that he did not believe in eternal punishment, having expressed this sentiment in a poem called *Die Frohe Botschaft*. Stuckey, however, refused to carry out the order. The question was taken up at the annual sessions of 1870-71-72 without a final agreement. Finally a committee of easterners was appointed to make a thorough investigation of the whole matter and dispose

^{26a} These are Ohio counties, but congregations are composed largely of Pennsylvania, not Alsatian, settlers.

of the case. This committee, made up of ultra-conservative Pennsylvanians, decided adversely to Stuckey and his congregation, which stood by him in this controversy. The committee further decided that Stuckey and his congregation, unless he complied with their findings, would no longer be regarded as members of the Conference.

Most of the other Illinois congregations regarded this decision as final, and it was announced in the various churches that Stuckey and his following were no longer one of them. Stuckey did not attend the later Conference sessions, which ceased a few years later on. There was no further formal division, however. The Illinois congregations were independent of each other and each went its own way. Had it not been for the influence later of the conservative Amish ministers of the East it is more than likely that today there would be little difference even in matters of dress between the Amish Mennonites and the followers of Joseph Stuckey. When, however, in the late eighties the Western District Conference of the Amish was organized, Stuckey's congregations were not included, and since then they have been considered a separate branch of the church. Stuckey not only retained control of his home church during this controversy, but also of a small congregation at Meadows which he had been serving as an elder. Soon other congregations joined his in a more liberal church policy, and new ones were formed. What was for a long time known as the "Stuckey" following grew and prospered largely at the expense of the old church until today there is a membership of about three thousand, nearly all in central Illinois and Indiana, although there are several churches in Nebraska. In 1899 these congregations organized a conference and assumed the name of Illinois Conference of Mennonites, since changed to *Central Conference* of Mennonites. Outside of the removal of dress restrictions this

group differs little from the former Amish Mennonites and the Old Mennonites in their faith and practise. The Conference maintains several city missions and in conjunction with the Defenseless Mennonites a station in the African Congo. They also maintain an Old People's Home at Meadows, and a large well equipped hospital at Bloomington. They have also been loyal supporters of Bluffton College, being represented on the Board of Trustees. Their ministers for the most part are young men well trained, salaried, and are among the most progressive in the entire Mennonite denomination.

Defenseless Mennonites

Even earlier another little storm center had developed among the Amish, first in Adams county, Indiana, and later also in Illinois and Ohio. The leader of this new movement was Henry Egli, a minister in the Amish congregation of that place. About 1864 Egli began to urge the necessity of a definite conversion experience in the religious life. His charge that the religious life of the time was too formal and was not based on a vital experience may have had some ground, but the contention that the austere, simply dressed brethren of that day were too liberal in their dress regulations can hardly be taken seriously. In 1866 Egli withdrew from the old church, and formed a new one which soon included the larger part of his former congregation. The movement later spread to Livingston and Tazewell counties, Illinois, where several large congregations have since developed.

At first Egli's followers were quite strict in their dress regulations, rather exclusive in their religious affiliations, and rebaptized all those of their members who had come from the old church who could not confess that they had been truly converted before, a confession which of course under the circumstances few would make. In recent

years the old differences have largely disappeared, and the younger generation has forgotten that they are not of one faith. They are optional immersionists, and have discarded the former dress restrictions. In every other respect their faith and practise is identical with that of the former Amish Mennonites and the other more conservative wings of the Mennonite denomination, with perhaps a bit more stress on "experimental" religion than is common among the others. At first they were spoken of as the "Egli Amish" by members of the church which they left, but they in turn officially assumed the name *Defenseless Mennonites*. The term *Defenseless* is somewhat misleading. They are no more "defenseless" than other groups. The name was chosen incidently without any significance as to differences from other groups. The present membership in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio and a few small communities in other states is about fifteen hundred.

The "New Amish"

Brief mention should be made here of another small disturbance among the Amish of Illinois and several other states in the early fifties. The "Neutaeufer" described in the chapter on Switzerland, sent several emissaries of their faith to their former Swiss countrymen in Wayne county, Ohio, in 1846, where they won a few converts. A little later others came to the Amish settlement in New York, from whence, together with a few recruits from the latter place, they found their way to the Amish community in Woodford county, Illinois. Here, too, they succeeded in bringing about the secession of a few of the dissatisfied members of the Amish church, and relatives of the New Yorkers. From Illinois, too, the movement was carried to the Butler county, Ohio, Amish settlement.

The new sect, which was locally known among the

Amish as the *New Amish*, but among themselves as the *Glaeubige*, (the faithful ones), had but a slow growth. By 1877 there were only eighty-nine members in all the various communities. Their number and influence would have been insignificant, and might have disappeared entirely had it not been for the immigration from Switzerland some time later of many recruits from their mother church. Today there are a number of large and prosperous congregations in central Illinois and Indiana with several in other near-by states.

Religiously the *Apostolic* church as it is now officially known, is very seclusive, and its members have no affiliation with other religious groups. They exercise a strict discipline among themselves, applying the practise of "avoidance" to the letter, to all business and social relationships as well as to religious fellowship; not even excepting husband and wife in case one or the other should be expelled from their communion.

In business matters and as farmers they are among the most industrious and uniformly prosperous members of the community. Wherever they locate they have the finest farms and the best live stock; and the price of land immediately goes up.

Their only connection with the Amish and Mennonites is that both in Switzerland and in America their first converts came from these sources; and they do share some of the fundamental religious doctrines with them—non-resistance, avoidance, once common also among the Amish and still practised among the Old Order, a general spirit of non-conformity to the world, insistence upon plain though not necessarily peculiar dress, and several other similar doctrines.

The Old Order Amish

This list of of Amish divisions and defections leaves

the main trunk of the conservative Amish with religious beliefs and social customs almost as they were in Switzerland, the land of their origin, several centuries ago. These are now generally known as the *Old Order Amish*, occasionally among their neighbors in Ohio as "Low" Amish, and in Indiana as "Blue" Amish because of their preference for blue as a common color for their painted fence gates and porch trimmings. The Old Order now have a membership of approximately ten thousand, grouped together in colonies stretching almost in a beeline straight west from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. In fundamental religious doctrines they do not differ from their other Amish or Mennonite brethren, except that they still strictly observe the religious practise of Avoidance, a practise also shared by a number of other conservative branches of the Mennonite denomination.

But in their religious and social customs, and their general life outlook, and especially their suspicion of everything new, the Old Order have remained decidedly conservative. Their distinctive social practises and peculiar styles of dress never have their origin in any departure from the established social order. They are never new, but on the contrary have always been relics and reminders of a usage general among the common people, sometimes ages ago. Beards were generally worn in Switzerland when Jacob Amman withdrew from his Mennonite brethren in the latter part of the seventeenth century. When shaving became common, fear of being regarded worldly prevented the Amish from following the new custom. Hooks and eyes were common, too, at the time, as were long hair, home made clothes and broad-brimmed hats. The collarless coat was the usual style worn by everybody in America until the days of Andrew Jackson when the straight collar had grown so high that

it had to be turned down to form the lapel of the modern coat; but fear of pride kept the Amish as well as the Lancaster county Mennonites from adopting the worldly collar.

And so, social customs, styles of dress, mind sets, all became fossilized, and have largely remained so until the present day among the Old Order. Such customs as have changed did so only under bitter protest. Every new demand made by improved methods of agriculture, more convenient household appliances, changing styles of dress, and every more enlightened social custom, or less as the case may be, was either not complied with at all, or was acceded to only after a long and bitter church struggle in which the pioneers of change were placed under the church ban. The Amish are very much afraid of worldliness.

Among these relics still surviving here and there among the various congregations are beards, hooks and eyes, broad-falls,²⁷ long hair, aprons, homemade clothes, broad-brimmed hats, dearborn top-buggies, bundling, etc. Among the new things, new once but old now among the general run of people, still quite generally tabooed by the Old Order with a few occasional exceptions are buttons, suspenders, store clothes, starched shirt fronts, detachable shirt collars, hats for women, parted hair, carpets, window curtains, wall pictures, sofas, writing desks, brightly painted farm machinery or houses, power farm machinery, steam heat in homes, bathtubs, "falling" top buggies, buggy springs, steps and lazy backs, whip-sockets, dash boards, bicycles, telephones, automobiles, radios, meeting houses, church conferences, Sunday schools, evening meetings, English preaching, note books, four part singing, musical instruments except the mouth harp, high

²⁷ Old fashioned sailor trousers. For lack of a better name sometimes called "barndoor britches."

school attendance, etc. Uniformity in dress, common usage and every form of personal appearance is prescribed. Children are dressed exactly like their elders, hooks and eyes and broad brimmed hats and all.

At times their consciences get the Amish into trouble with the authorities when government regulations in their minds conflict with the laws of God. In Pennsylvania they refused to accept the government farm bonus for curtailing their crops, although they voluntarily reduced their acreage; but they killed no pigs. In Holmes county they encountered more serious difficulty recently when they refused to send their children to the centralized high schools for the period of years prescribed by state law.

Sometimes when a new farm utensil appears that proves to be especially useful, and especially if its ownership and use can not be accredited to a spirit of pride, there is a tendency to be a bit more liberal in accepting new things. Thus the tractor has been a strong temptation to many an Amish farmer. In Indiana, tractors were permitted for a time for belt uses only, that is for running machinery, threshing and grinding, but not for field work; in Iowa it was allowed for field work but not with rubber tires. This attempt to satisfy both his sensitive conscience and his social urge as well as his material interests at the same time frequently leads the Amishman to strangely inconsistent compromises. The telephone which is forbidden on the kitchen wall loses its sinful character if attached to the fence post in the front yard; while the radio which is anathema in the living room becomes merely a source of harmless enjoyment and diversion out in the wood-shed. To own an automobile is a sin, but to ride to town in the neighbor's is not.

Rigidly prescribed though their daily lives may be by church regulations, yet there is room for slight differences among the Old Order Amish. The large compact

settlement in the Kishacoquillas valley in Pennsylvania may serve as a good example of this diversification. There are seven grades of Amish in this beautiful valley, including the Amish Mennonites; and five of these at least might be classed as Old Order with beard, long hair, hooks and eyes, and without meeting houses. They range in order on the basis of conservative practice all the way from the *Nebraskas*, who observe all the usual taboos of the Amish, and besides are distinguished by white shirts, and white dearborns,²⁸ hair falling to the shoulders, no suspenders, the old fashioned homemade shaker hat tied under the chin for women, and whose chief dish at the Sunday dinners given after the services by the host is bean soup; through the *Old School* who may wear colored shirts, with hair a bit shorter than the above, driving yellow topped dearborns, and whose women wear small bonnets; then the *Yost Yoder* church whose members may cut their hair to the tip of the ear, are permitted one suspender if non-elastic, and no bean soup at the common Sunday dinner, a stipulation however, that may have no religious significance; then fourth, the *Peachey* church, a little more liberal still, which permits hair cut as far as the middle of the ear, dearborns black or brown, and women permitted to wear the pasteboard or "slat" bonnet; and so on through several other advancing grades until we reach the *Amish-Mennonites*, who have meeting houses, and, with the exception of hats for the women and musical instruments in worship, have no objection to modern forms of dress or up to date conveniences. Each of these groups believes its own brand to be the best. Each church, says one who knows them well,²⁹ looks at

28 Old fashioned "canopy" top, square and stationary.

29 Professor J. W. Yoder of Juniata College, who has spent many of his early years among the Amish in the Kishacoquillas, and an authority on their life and habits, and especially their music.

the church above with suspicion, and the church below with compassion.

This description of the Old Order thus far given would not be fair to them without an additional word on the other side. Their peculiarities are only superficial after all, and based on religious convictions, honest though misguided at times. The press notices occasionally given them, and their treatment by modern writers of fiction never render them justice. Even their extreme uniform, modest dress regulations on the one hand are often to be preferred, peculiar though they may be, to the extreme demands of dame Fashion on the other. They are a devout, honest people, devoted to their families, generous to all human needs, law abiding, industrious, mindful of their own business, and usually highly successful as farmers. Their less prosperous neighbors may smile at their broad-brimmed hats and long hair, but they can have nothing but admiration for their fine farms and well fed cattle, and comfortable bank accounts. In 1935 the blue ribbon for raising the prize champion steer at the International Fat Stock Show in Chicago, a prize that brought thirty-two hundred dollars at auction afterwards, was awarded to a broad-brimmed Amish boy of Johnson county, Iowa. You can't laugh at that.

XIII

THE COMING OF THE RUSSIANS¹

(1874-1884)

The Russian background of the immigration of the German-Russian Mennonites to America during the seventies of the past century has been described in a preceding chapter; and only the American side of the movement need be told here. As already noted, after considering various possibilities in South America, Africa and eastern Siberia as a possible asylum for such as had decided to leave Russia, North America, though with some misgivings, was finally agreed upon as affording the best prospects for their future home. As early as 1872 and '73 several small parties had arrived here on tours of inspection or to remain permanently. Among these first comers were young Bernhard Warkentin, who later became a prosperous business man in Newton, Kansas; Cornelius Jansen, former Prussian consul at Berdiansk, who, because of his interest in the immigration movement, was given seven days by the Russian government to leave the country; and David Goerz, a young school teacher, who for a time found employment in the parochial school at Summerfield, Illinois, but later also a prominent leader among his people. These three men, together with others

1 These Mennonites from Russia of course were not Russian Slavs, but Germans culturally, and Dutch for the most part originally. But the term Russian shall be used here and throughout this book wherever reference is made to them. Dutch-German-Russian would be too cumbersome a title. They were Dutch racially; German, culturally; and Russian, nationally.

who came later took a leading part in everything that affected the welfare of their fellow immigrants, and especially in directing them to their new homes on the western prairies.

Earliest Arrivals

Although the great exodus from the large colonies did not begin before 1874, several additional small groups had arrived even before the "Committee of Twelve" had reached home to report on their tour of inspection. From



David Goerz

the files of the *Herald of Truth* we learn that by January, 1874, there were ten or twelve families near Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and several more in Marion and McPherson counties, Kansas, which soon became one of the centers of large settlements. In the same issue it was announced that one thousand families were to start for America in April. By May the stream had begun. The issue of the *Herald* for May 5, announced the arrival of fifty-eight Mennonites from Poland. By May 20, fifty more Poles (Volhynians) had arrived and located at

Yankton, Dakota. The June issue reported that forty more had been brought by William Ewert, the Prussian member of the Committee of Twelve, to Summerfield, Illinois, from which place they soon found their way to new homes in Kansas. On July 8, seven more families stopped at Summerfield enroute to Kansas.

Lending a Helping Hand

In the meantime the different branches of the American Mennonites were busy organizing emergency committees to provide for the temporary needs of the new arrivals, and to help them to their new western homes. Some of the immigrants were rich, others well-to-do, but the large majority were poor and some extremely so. Many of these had to be provided with means to begin their life on the raw prairies and had to be temporarily supported.

In 1873, the Western District Conference largely through the influence of Reverend Christian Krehbiel of Summerfield had appointed a committee to collect money for such of the immigrants as might need help, and to direct them to their new settlements. About the same time John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, secured a similar organization among the Old Mennonites of the middle West. These two organizations were soon consolidated into the *Mennonite Board of Guardians*, with Christian Krehbiel as president; David Goerz, as secretary; John F. Funk, treasurer; and Bernhard Warkentin, agent. The Mennonites of eastern Pennsylvania organized a special committee, as did also the Canadian church under the leadership of J. Y. Schantz of Berlin, Ontario. These organizations all did valuable service in providing for the needs and conveniences of the Russians while they were becoming settled. It is estimated that about \$100,000 was collected and spent for this work, some of which was

tendered as a loan and later repaid. In addition to this sum there were many individual loans, and in Manitoba the Canadian Government advanced a loan of approximately \$100,000 at six per cent, to prospective settlers upon security furnished by Ontario Mennonites, all of which in due time was paid back.

Railroad companies and state immigration departments that had vast stretches of unoccupied lands still awaiting settlement took a lively interest in the coming of thousands of industrious European farmers. The Canadian Government passed an Order in Council offering each settler of twenty-one years of age and over a free homestead of one hundred and sixty acres, with an option on another three-quarters of a section at one dollar per acre in the Province of Manitoba. To the Mennonites full religious rights were granted with exclusive control over their schools, and entire military exemption. Some twenty-six townships of land were finally reserved for the exclusive use of the Mennonites.

In Kansas, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, aided by the state immigration department, secured the passage of a similar law exempting the future colonists from the state militia service. A similar concession was also made later by the state legislatures of Nebraska and Minnesota, in an attempt to attract some of the immigrants to their cheap lands. Vast stretches of railroad land were offered at from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre. So active was the Santa Fe Company in directing the immigrants to Kansas that they sent their agent, C. B. Schmidt, to the Russian colonies for the purpose of presenting early the claims of the Sunflower state. The company even chartered a Red Star ocean steamer which was sent to the Black Sea for a shipload of Mennonite household goods and farm implements. These goods were brought to New York, and thence by rail to Kansas all

free of charge to the colonists. Influential men among the immigrants and members of the various committees were granted passes over the road. Groups of immigrants as they arrived at the Atlantic ports were carried west in special trains. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company was equally active in Nebraska, but the Santa Fe secured the largest number of settlers for Kansas.

They Come in Large Numbers

Aided and directed by these various organizations, the immigrants continued to find their way to the western settlements by the hundreds throughout the summer and autumn of 1874. The Herald reports that on July 18, eighty families had reached Burlington, Iowa, enroute to Nebraska. The next day, thirty arrived from the Crimea under the leadership of their elder, Jacob Wiebe, at Elkhart, Indiana, where they remained for the night in the Mennonite meeting house at that place, and the next day left — some for Kansas, and others for Yankton, Dakota. The total number of arrivals at the harbor of New York by July 8, was six hundred. At the same time too, many had arrived at Toronto, Canada, on their way to Manitoba. On July 20, three hundred and seventy are reported, and on July 30, two hundred and ninety more. The next day five hundred and four left for Manitoba. And thus the steady stream continued throughout all the summer and fall. An account given in November, 1874, shows that the Mennonite Board of Guardians reported from the Inman line the arrival of two hundred families. The Pennsylvania Aid Committee reported thirty-five families on the Hamburg line. The Canadian committee reported the arrival of two hundred and thirty by way of the Allan line for the year. The total estimate for all the settlements for the year was about twelve hundred families, with the prospect that another thousand families

would follow in 1875. And the latter year was largely a repetition of the first. Whole vessels were chartered by the immigrants. In December, 1874, seven hundred had arrived in the *Fatherland*, and four hundred in the *Abbotsford*. On July 25, 1875, the *Netherlands* steamed up to the dock at New York with five hundred and fifty Mennonites on board, and soon after the *Nevada* unloaded five hundred and seventy.

By the fall of 1875, the greatest rush was over, but small bands of Mennonites continued to come up to 1880 and several even later. By August, 1879, the Herald estimates that in Manitoba alone there were seven thousand three hundred and eighty-three Mennonites. The number in the United States—Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota and Minnesota was somewhat larger. The exact number of arrivals during this period is somewhat conjectural, since no accurate statistics were kept by any one so far as known. But from a rather careful count of the lists as they appeared in the Mennonite papers of the day it would seem that the total number of Mennonite immigrants from Russia to America during the ten year period following 1874 was about eighteen thousand—ten thousand to the United States, and eight thousand to Manitoba.

As already indicated these colonists came in various groups, separated in Russia by geographical or doctrinal differences. Those from the Old or *Chortitz* colony, and the entire *Bergthal* church, and a number from the *Fuerstenland*, two daughter colonies of *Chortitz*, located in Manitoba. The *Molotschna* furnished the settlers in Kansas, Nebraska and other western states. The Volhynians went to Dakota and Kansas. The *Hutterites* located in Dakota. Scattered members from all the Russian colonies were found throughout all of the United States settlements. Besides these geographical groups, which differed more or less from one another, there were the

different church divisions imported from Russia, to which were added several which developed in America. Among those imported were the *Brueder Gemeinde*, *Krimmer Brueder*, the *Kleine Gemeinde*, and a small division unnamed in Russia but known at first in America as the *Isaac Peters Gemeinde*. Usually the immigrants came in compact groups or sometimes as whole congregations led by faithful elders and devoted laymen. Among these leaders may be mentioned elder Jacob Buller, and school teacher Heinrich Richert of the *Alexanderwohl* congregation; Deitrich Gaeddert of *Hoffnungsaus*, a subdivision of *Alexanderwohl*; Johan Wiebe for the *Old Colonists* in Manitoba; Gerhard Wiebe of the *Bergthalers*; Jacob Wiebe of the *Krimmer Brethren*; Abraham Shellenberg, somewhat belated, of the *Mennonite Brethren*; Leonhard Suderman from *Berdiansk*; Wilhelm Ewert with the *Prussian* contingent; Andreas Schrag, a layman, and Elder Jacob Stuckey with the *Swiss Volhynian* group; and Elder Tobias Unruh with the poverty stricken *Cantoners*, also from Volhynia; Paul and Laurence Tschetter of the Hutterite group; and a number of others.

Manitoba

The most conservative groups—those from *Chortitz*, and her two daughter colonies, *Bergthal* and *Fuerstenland*, together with the *Kleine Gemeinde* contingent—chose Manitoba as their home, largely because here they were definitely promised military exemption and large compact areas of land where they might establish their closed colonies as they had them in Russia, thus maintaining their distinctive way of life without any outside interference, with their own schools, their distinct German language, and a large degree of local self government. As already noted, they were granted two land reserves, the East and West, to which was added another somewhat

later along the Scratching river—totalling all told twenty-seven townships on both sides of the Red river south of Winnipeg.

Here they tried to reproduce again on the raw prairies of Manitoba the whole social and economic order as far as possible as they had it on the steppes of Russia, including their farm villages. They formed themselves into groups of from fifteen to thirty homesteads, with their houses built well back from a long, wide street which in course of time became lined with poplar and other fast growing shade trees. Each village was given a distinct name, frequently in memory of the Russian homes they had left—*Chortitz*, *Bergthal*, *Schoenwiese*, *Rosenort*, etc. *Schanzenfeld* honored one of their benefactors.

Each village, too, became practically a self sufficient economic and civil unit with its school and shop; and in connection with other villages, a church congregation. Each had its own local magistrate (Schultz) and together with others in the colony was ruled over by a superintendent (Ober-Schultz), who directed the secular affairs of the entire colony; while the elder, assisted by a number of untrained and unpaid ministers, had charge of spiritual matters as well as a considerable voice occasionally in matters purely temporal. Each farmer had a deed to his own tract of land, but for purposes of cultivation the whole land area was divided and distributed among the farmers in long and equal convenient strips without reference to ownership.

This type of farm life was gradually abandoned in the course of time. With the trek of the Old Colonists to Mexico it finally disappeared almost entirely, although many of the former villages remain; and some, like Steinbach in the East Reserve, have since developed into important centers of agricultural and industrial life. Thriving towns like Rosenfeld, Winkler and Plum Coulee have

also grown up on the outskirts and along the railroads of the West Reserve.

These first settlers along the Red endured all the hardships of pioneer life. At this time there wasn't a single mile of railroad in the entire province. They had no white neighbors for miles around. Winnipeg, the nearest town, had only a few hundred inhabitants, and had just graduated from a frontier fort—Fort Garry. The total population of Manitoba was not above several thousand, most of whom were half-breeds with a smaller number of pure Indians along the western fringe. This Mennonite settlement was the first attempt at mass colonization on the raw prairies south of Winnipeg, and as such attracted considerable attention on the part of the Canadian authorities.

Living conditions were hard for the first few years. The virgin sod had never felt the plough share; building material was far away; the winters were long and cold; fuel was scarce; household conveniences were lacking; prairie life was lonely. To make matters worse, on top of all these hardships for several years the anxious settlers had to see their scanty harvests threatened by an unusual grasshopper plague. Most of the colonists were poor and had to be helped by a loan from the Canadian government, guaranteed by their Ontario Old Mennonite brethren. A local homesick rhymester, longing for the comforts he left behind bemoans his fate with these words:

*Mit Traenen seh ich an die Staette,
Die ich zum Wohnsitz mir erwaeHLT,
Kein Haus, kein Herd, kein Stuhl, kein Bette,
Kein Pferd, kein Vieh, kein Fleisch, kein Mehl,
Kein Schuessel, Loeffel, alles fehlt,
Wie los bin ich auf dieser Welt.*

They had courage though, and hope, and pluck. Gradually these hardships were overcome, and the raw prairies

were turned into vast fields of golden grain and into pastures filled with fine herds of sleek cattle. Their colonies became the proud show places for travellers and visiting public officials from the East. As early as 1877 Lord Dufferin, then Governor General of Canada, included a visit through the East Reserve in his tour of inspection through Manitoba. In a farewell reception tendered him by the city of Winnipeg as he left for Ottawa, he spoke of this visit in most glowing and somewhat exaggerated terms. Among other fine things he said:

"Although I have witnessed many sights to give me pleasure during my various progresses through the Dominion, seldom have I beheld any spectacle more pregnant with prophecy, more fraught with promise of an astonishing future than the Mennonite settlement. (Great applause). When I visited these interesting people they had been only two years in the Province, and yet in a long ride I took across the prairies which but yesterday was absolutely bare, desolate and untenanted, and the home of the wolf, badger and the eagle, I passed village after village, homestead after homestead, furnished with all the conveniences and incidents of European comfort and a scientific agriculture; while on the other side of the road were cornfields already ripe for harvest, and pastures populous with herds of cattle stretching away to the horizon. (Great cheering). Even on this continent, the peculiar theatre of rapid change and progress, there has nowhere, I imagine, taken place so marvelous a transformation. (renewed cheering).²

Daughter Colonies

As the Manitoba settlement outgrew its original allotments, and as the provinces farther west opened up for colonization, the surplus population followed the general trend toward the setting sun. In the early nineties of the past century large colonies from all the Manitoba settlements located in Saskatchewan; and in the early years of the present century smaller groups moved

² The Winnipeg Free Press.

into Alberta, and a small number into British Columbia. After the late war, too, most of the Hutterites, leaving their Dakota homes because of their war experiences, established themselves in western Canada. Mennonites seldom moved into new communities as isolated settlers, but always as large groups into an area of cheap lands where they could organize themselves into a compact church congregation. Of course in later years after all the cheap lands had been taken up this was no longer easy. In the middle twenties of the present century the large groups of new immigrants from Russia scattered themselves throughout the cities and farm communities of western Canada wherever homes were available. But this later story is told in a succeeding chapter.

Culture

Religiously and culturally the Manitoba Mennonites lagged somewhat behind their achievements in the field of material progress. Though all were ultra-conservative, some were more so than others, the most extreme being the *Fuerstenlanders* on the West Reserve, later called the *Old Colonists*. The *Kleine Gemeinders* were not far behind. All were determined to preserve the German language exclusively, their own schools, their village life and all the other traditional customs and practises without the slightest change. In the early nineties when a small group of such of the *Bergthalers* as had moved from the East Reserve to the West had demanded a more progressive school system than that prevailing, they were cast out of fellowship of the group, and later came to be known as the *Sommerfelders*. Other small groups, still more progressive, formed independent congregations and organized themselves into a General Conference of their own; most of them also affiliating with the progressive General Conference division in the United States.

The religious practises prevailing among the Old Colonists at the time of their Mexican exodus were typical of most of the groups at the time of the first settlement. They worshipped in meeting houses that were severely plain and unpainted. The hard seats without backs, added nothing to the comfort of listening to long sermons read from a book of manuscripts, in a monotonous sleep-inducing, sing-song tone. The preacher never looked at his audience. The merest suggestion of a raised eyelid, the least gesture with his hands, or the shrug of the shoulders, the slightest departure in any respect from the practises of the fathers would have been met not only with astonishment but instant disapproval on the part of such of the congregation as were sufficiently awake to notice the innovation. In dress the laity as well as the preachers had to conform to long established conventionalities. White collars, bearded chins, and such vanities as shining watch chains and their like were strictly forbidden. To be in good standing and a proper example to his flock the Old Colony preacher should appear in the pulpit in the old-fashioned sailor trousers tucked in high topped boots. Women likewise were to be garbed in conventional dress-aprons and shawls, somber clothes cut after uniform and prescribed patterns.

The language of the pulpit was German; that of every day conversation some form of *Platt-deutsch*, imported from Prussia to Russia more than a century before. Prayer was offered in silence, the worshippers kneeling. In their singing they used an old hymn book also imported from their Prussian ancestral homes; and were led by a *Vorsinger*. The hymns were without notes, and the melodies to which they were sung had undergone wonderful transformations as they had come down through the generations. Since the singing of different parts was regarded as a worldly innovation, all sang in unison.

Of religious affiliation with other Mennonite bodies of course there was none whatever. Participation in the civil and political life that centered in the towns on the outskirts of the settlement was unknown. Church members were even forbidden to take up their residence in these towns, much less engage in business. All such religious and social affiliation was regarded as being unequally yoked with the world, and hence to be strictly avoided. Public schools, too, as we saw were tabooed, and the German language insisted upon as a means of instruction. All these regulations were enforced by a strict application of the ban, to which was added the practice of *Avoidance*. Civil office, modern clothing, modern houses, the English language, Sunday schools, public schools, higher schools of any sort, prayer meetings, salaried ministers, telephones, automobiles (hell-wagons), and numerous other institutions which are usually regarded as symptoms of progress—all these were considered as of the “world,” and to be given a wide berth by the true Christian.

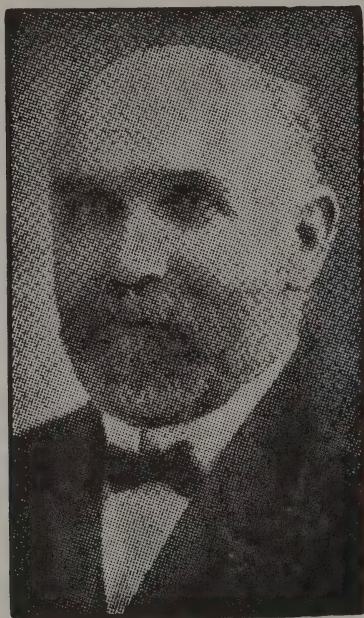
Such were still the Old Colonists at the time of their trek to Mexico in the early twenties of the present century. Deluded and foolish they were, so we say according to our modern notions; but they were nevertheless an honest, devout and sincere people, sturdy of character, and in many respects useful and worthy citizens; no more addicted to religious formality than were our boasted Puritan forefathers at the time of their search for a haven of refuge and the same religious liberty some centuries ago.

Of course the above description does not fit the large majority of the more progressive Russian Mennonites found today all through Canada.

The Russian Mennonites especially were greatly concerned about the education of their children. The first

building to be erected in their pioneer settlements after they had established their homes was the school house. And since the chief objectives of their educational program was the preservation of their fathers' religion and the German language, they were greatly concerned that they retain complete control of their schools. Naturally such schools with these limited objectives were not of a high order. Perhaps as high as many others, however. At first the provincial government furnished but little supervision. The first schools thus in both Reserves were private schools. It was only gradually that these were changed into public schools, supported by public taxation, and brought under government supervision, which improved their character somewhat. Poorly equipped teachers at first taught exclusively in German. The curriculum was meager. Finally the English language was introduced with the German—the provincial government permitting both languages as a means of instruction until the close of the late war. During the last decade of the past century and the first of this, H. H. Ewert, the former pioneer educator among his people in Kansas, performed valuable service in raising the educational standard among the Manitoba Mennonites. Amid great discouragements and with many sacrifices he spent a good part of his life in behalf of the educational interest of his people. For twelve years, 1893 to 1905, he occupied the position of government inspector of Mennonite schools, during which time he increased the public schools from a bare half dozen to some forty. He was also one of the leading spirits in the founding of the Gretna Normal school for the training of teachers in both the private and public schools, of which there were over one hundred at the close of the war. Under the liberal bilingual law permitting both languages to be used, considerable progress was made, and the use of English was becoming more

and more common. David Toews, head of the Rosthern school, has been doing the same kind of service for the Mennonite schools of Saskatchewan in more recent years as that of Ewert in Manitoba.



H. H. Ewert

School Trouble

Such was the school situation among the Canadian Mennonites up to the close of the war. The strong spirit of nationalism engendered by the war brought about a radical change in the liberal educational policy which the western provinces had followed up to this time relative to all their foreign populations whether German, French or Slavic. In both Manitoba and Saskatchewan laws were passed forbidding the use of any other language

than English in either private or public schools. These laws with their drastic elimination of German as a means of instruction among the Mennonites who for fifty years had known hardly any other tongue in their religious worship and social intercourse, spread consternation among them and called forth a determined opposition not only from the conservatives but also from the progressives who had been most favorable to the extension of the public school system. Some of these latter now favored changing their public schools back into private institutions in the belief that the law would not be so strictly enforced in the private as in the public system. For several years the governments followed a watchful waiting policy, and the laws were not rigorously enforced. Among the progressive groups who had already adopted the English language as the principal medium of instruction, German was still retained as a subject of study for an hour or so each day. So long as the schools measured up to the required standards of instruction, and the English was well taught, the inspectors did not inquire too closely into the small amount of German that was still retained. The Old Colonists, too, who refused all English were given a breathing spell to adapt themselves to the new conditions, and make up their minds as to their future course.

But the coming of the Hutterites from the Dakotas into Canada in 1918 brought the matter to a head. Although not Mennonites, yet the Hutterites were so classed by the Canadians. And the coming of more Mennonites just now when feeling was already strong against them because of their special exemption from military service and their German extraction, brought to the surface all the latent opposition to their privileged status which had been gathering all through the war. Largely through the organized efforts of ex-service men, and the public

press, drastic measures were passed by the Dominion government forbidding further immigration of Mennonites into Canada, and by the Provincial authorities forbidding the use of German in the schools. Most of the Mennonite groups after several years of petitioning to the Legislatures, and vain appealing to the Courts, finally bowed to the inevitable and conformed to the Provincial laws. The Old Colonists, however, in both Provinces, to whom the German school seemed an integral part of their religious system, preferred persecution to what they believed would seriously threaten the maintenance of their religious faith, and to what they interpreted as an infringement of their religious liberty as well as a violation of the promises of 1873.

They stubbornly resisted all the efforts of the school authorities to establish public schools among them, and to compel their children to attend them. In Saskatchewan the government finally erected public buildings, or confiscated private ones, levied taxes among the unwilling patrons to pay for them; appointed outside trustees over the schools; sent in outside English teachers; and then awaited results. Nothing happened. Few children came. Then to enforce attendance the courts fined and jailed the parents. A news item from Hague appearing in the Steinbach Post on March 31, 1921, stating that a short time before sixty Mennonites had paid a fine of one thousand dollars and that one had just been given a thirty day jail sentence in Prince Albert is a typical illustration of what was going on elsewhere.

In Manitoba, too, similar measures were adopted, though they were not so drastically enforced. Public schools with exclusive English instruction were everywhere established under the control of Provincial trustees. The Old Colonists here, too, refused to send their children;

and a number of parents among other groups did so under compulsion. English teachers hired by these trustees drew a year's salary without teaching a single day. Parents were fined. But none of these measures succeeded in gaining the desired end. The Old Colonists could not become reconciled to the loss of their school privileges. Nothing seemed left now for them but another trek to a new land of freedom where the need of new settlers and the absence of anti-German feeling might guarantee them the liberties which they had so generously enjoyed in Canada since 1873. As early as 1919 there was talk of leaving Canada. During the next two years delegations were sent to various South American countries, Mexico, and several of our own southern states. Strange as it may seem they were everywhere promised their demands, even in Mississippi and Florida—religious liberty, complete control over their schools, with permission to use the language of their choice. They finally foolishly selected Mexico; and in 1922 began an emigration which resulted in the loss to Canada of some five thousand Old Colonists, somewhat queer in their religious demands, but yet among Canada's best farmers and most peaceable citizens. The fine homesteads which the Old Colonists sold at a sacrifice both in Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, have in some cases been taken over by the newer Russian immigrants who on the contrary are not only eager to learn English but have contributed greatly to the educational progress of the Canadian Mennonites as a whole.

Several years later about two thousand Sommerfelders and Bergthalers from both Manitoba and Saskatchewan migrated to Paraguay for similar reasons.

Western United States

The settlements this side of the international boundary also were located along the western frontier line

through Minnesota, Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Most of the Mennonites here came from the less conservative Molotschna colony and other scattered Russian communities. Like their Manitoba brethren they, too, asked for land reservations large enough to form compact and closed Mennonite communities. This demand was debated in the United States Senate for several weeks, during which Senator Pratt of Indiana, speaking of the native Mennonites in his state said, "There is no worthier class of people upon the face of the globe"; and Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania in behalf of his own state added "They are among our best citizens." But to no avail, The bill embodying these demands did not pass. The Homestead act did not permit the granting or reserving the public domain in areas larger than one hundred and sixty acres to any one person; and the railroad companies owned only every alternate section along their right of way. Except in a few cases, therefore, no attempt was made to reproduce the Russian village type of life in our own west. Virgin land was bought by the settlers from the railroad companies, or from former homesteaders, who for a few dollars profit were glad to pull up stakes and move farther west. Some of the poorer immigrants took up Congress land. All the settlements, however, in course of time developed into rather compact communities.

Over half of the new comers to the United States located in the state of Kansas along the then frontier line through the central part of the state in Harvey, McPherson and Reno counties, north of Wichita, on lands owned by the Santa Fe Railroad company, largely no doubt due to the activities of that company and especially of its German colonization agent, C. B. Schmidt. The Santa Fe aided the settlers in every possible way, sold them cheap land, gave them reduced freight rates, and built immigration barracks to house them temporarily while

they were selecting their prospective homes and erecting their first crude living quarters.

Most of the settlements consisted of selected groups or congregations that had lived together in Russia. One of the largest of these was the *Alexanderwohl* congregation consisting of about six hundred souls, which came as a solid organization, with an unbroken history from Russia, through Prussia to Holland in the sixteenth century. Arriving on the raw prairies late in the fall of 1874, sixty-five heads of families in this group engaged an outfit of carpenters to build for them north of Newton as many small one story houses, twenty by forty feet in size, before the winter snows fell.

In the meantime, other groups were spreading across the surrounding prairies. The Krimmer-Brethren, some thirty families, founded the only village among the Kansas immigrants which they named *Gnadenau*. The Swiss Volhynians, under the leadership of elder Jacob Stuckey, located a bit farther north in McPherson county. Tobias Unruh and his party from old Poland selected the region about *Canton*.

Halstead, a little hamlet along the Santa Fe in Harvey county, named after a well known journalist of the day, the nucleus of a settlement made by a group of Palatines from Summerfield, Illinois, became the cultural and administrative center of the whole Kansas emigration movement for a time. Here lived Bernhard Warkentin, who later established a prosperous milling business, and introduced from Russia the well known hard Turkey Red wheat now known all over the West; David Goerz, directing head of many of the early Mennonite enterprises, and editor of the *Zur Heimat*, a weekly devoted to the interests of the Russian Mennonites of both Russia and America, a paper quite cosmopolitan in character, not at all like the ordinary run of country weeklies published in a vil-

lage of two hundred, carrying in its advertising pages more notices of ship and railroad companies with dates of sailing than the great New York dailies; and Christian Krehbiel of the Sommerfelders, founder of an Indian school, and president of the Mennonite Board of Guardians. Halstead also became the seat of the first school of higher learning among the western Mennonites,— Halstead Seminary.

Other western states, too, got a smaller share of the new settlers. Cornelius Jansen joined a group of *Kleine-Gemeinders* in Jefferson county, Nebraska where he purchased several sections of land from the Burlington and Missouri Railroad company, and later had the town of *Jansen* named in his honor, the first town in Nebraska to have written into every deed for a lot the stipulation that no saloon could be established on the premises. Several congregations were also established in York and Hamilton counties. The colony near Beatrice was of Prussian origin.

In Minnesota the beautiful rich region about *Mountain Lake* in the southwestern part of the state became the center of a number of substantial Mennonite congregations.

The Hutterites and some of the Swiss Volhynians located in the southeastern part of what was then the territory of Dakota, not far from Yankton.

These foreigners with their strange customs and foreign clothes, coming in large groups, often aroused a good deal of interest in the small frontier towns when they first arrived. In the fall of 1874 the Santa Fe company was obliged to find temporary quarters for a few weeks in their railroad shops at Topeka for several hundred families enroute to their homes on the prairies. Here the new comers were visited by large and curious crowds of Topeka citizens who sometimes regarded their future

possibilities with some misgivings. Speaking of the appearance of the men of the party the Topeka *Commonwealth* observes:

"The men appear to have conscientious scruples against wearing clothes that fit them, the idea appearing to be to get all the cloth you can for the money. The men's vests therefore descend toward the knees, and their pants possess an alarming amount of slack. Their favorite headgear is a flat cloth cap which they pull off in saluting any person. This habit they will soon drop now that they have arrived in Kansas where 'nobody respects nothing'."

But when these strange Mennonites began to spend large sums of money freely in the Topeka stores for farm utensils and household necessities for their western homes idle curiosity turned to admiration, and the *Commonwealth* forgot all about the "alarming amount of the slack in their pants," and thought instead only of their future economic worth to Topekans. "These people" the *Commonwealth* now says,—

"are making extensive purchases from our neighbors, creating quite a demand for articles necessary to opening homes. This is creating quite a trade which, considering the dull times, is very acceptable to our merchants. The people will be large buyers for some time to come, and the acquaintances formed by their temporary location here will give our merchants a strong hold on their trade which it only needs their exercise to retain."

It was for the purpose, no doubt, of cultivating this good feeling that the merchants and public officials of Topeka planned a public reception, and a procession through the city which all the citizens were urged to join. The reason for this public recognition of the Mennonites in Topeka, according to promoters of the plan was to show "our friends from Russia that we recognize and appreciate their presence among us and are anxious to cultivate neighborly relations with them."

Not all the Mennonite immigrants were as well supplied with means to buy utensils and implements for their farms. Many were poor and needed all the help so generously granted them by the relief societies of the American Mennonites. Among the poorest was the Polish contingent under Tobias Unruh which landed almost unannounced in Florence, Kansas, one cold winter morning with the thermometer twelve below zero, lacking food, shelter, clothing and the means with which they might supply themselves with these elemental necessities. This emergency taxed the ingenuity of the Mennonite Board of Guardians almost to the limit. The Board after an emergency session immediately supplied the new arrivals with temporary winter quarters in the surrounding towns; and the next spring helped them each to a forty acre farm with a limited amount of equipment, all with money lent them by eastern Mennonites.

Transplanting a Bit of Russia

The Russian Mennonites of our own West also tried to transplant as much as possible of their Russian way of life to their new homes. Villages of course with the exception of Gnadenau were impracticable; and this one exception was soon abandoned. But the German language, the parochial school, interest in the mission cause, their own hospitals, children's homes, and fire insurance companies, all these were encouraged as they had been in their old home. Favorite articles of diet, too, were continued — watermelons, "sorghum molasses," sunflower seeds, and cucumbers. Occasionally they attempted to adopt some of their German farm utensils to American conditions. The Manitobans early ordered from Russia a supply of their farm wagons, but when it was found that the narrow gauge of the foreign vehicle would not fit the wider track of the American wagon the order was

not repeated. In Kansas several farmers manufactured for their fellow Russians a number of their familiar threshing stones, but here, too, the American power thresher soon rendered this primitive method of threshing obsolete.

Wheat growing of course was as well adapted to the American western prairies as to Russian steppes, and flour milling became an important industry in all the Russian Mennonite communities. It was the Mennonites, as already noted, who first introduced from Russia the variety of hard wheat now almost universally sown by the western farmers. For a time the Mennonites about Peabody, Kansas tried to introduce silk culture. After a rather unsuccessful experiment for several years, however, the attempt had to be given up, but not until after a silk dress made of home grown cocoons had been presented to the wife of the Kansas governor. The only evidence left today of this early attempt to introduce a new industry into sunny Kansas where the climatic conditions seemed especially well adapted for the experiment are the long rows of mulberry trees still occasionally found along the boundary lines of Mennonite farms in the central part of the state.

But there was one Russian institution that was well adapted to the needs of the American prairies with its lack of wood and coal; and which elicited nothing but the highest praise from the natives—the big straw-burning Russian brick oven and stove. This oven was so built into the walls of the three main rooms of the typical Mennonite home as to heat the entire house and at the same time serve for cooking. The big fireplace was fed with straw for an hour or so each morning and the brick retaining the heat, kept the building warm for the remainder of the day. On the prairies where fuel was non-existent this straw-burning heater was far superior to the native

stove which burned only corn-cobs or buffalo chips. The Manitoban Mennonites made an excellent fuel from rotten straw and manure in the form of sun-dried brick, a fuel still to be found in a few of the homesteads of the Old Colonists.

The Organized Church

With the exception of the *Krimmer-Brethren*, the *Kleine-Gemeinde*, and a few scattered members of the *Mennonite-Brethren* church, and one or two other independent bodies, all these groups early united their forces in promoting their common religious and educational interests. Schools and missions were the chief cultural concern for a time, and it was for the purpose of advancing their common school cause that they met in 1877 to organize what became known as the *Kansas Conference*. Affiliated with the Russians in these efforts were the Bavarians at Halstead, and the Prussians near Newton. When the Prussian congregation at Beatrice, Nebraska, joined them some years later the name was changed to the *Western District Conference*. Daughter colonies from Oklahoma and other nearby states have since joined this conference.

The Dakota and Minnesota groups later organized themselves for similar purposes into the *Northern District Conference*. Still later as states farther west were settled by Mennonites from these older colonies the *Pacific Coast Conference* was founded. In course of years, too, these various conferences assimilated the Prussian, Swiss and Galician congregations which grew up in the meantime in these regions. Practically all the congregations included in these three district organizations now also hold membership in the *General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America*.

At the time of the immigration both the Old Men-

nonites in America and the General Conference were generous in their support of the new arrivals with money and other forms of service; and both invited them into membership in their bodies. The Old Mennonites, however, because of their conservative dress regulations and other practises were more hesitant to assimilate the new arrivals, than were the General Conference Mennonites. The latter, too, at the time were more sympathetic to the cause of foreign missions than the former, a cause of considerable interest among the Russians even before their migration. The different congregations joined the General Conference independently and at different times. The Alexanderwohlers were the first, in 1876; the Dakota Swiss followed in 1881; Minnesota sent her first delegates in 1890; and Nebraska, in 1893. Each succeeding conference session found new additions. Isaac Peters in Nebraska and Aaron Wall in Minnesota remained outside. The session of 1938 held at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, reported a membership of one hundred congregations from the three districts above mentioned, and twenty-three from western Canada.³

A group of *Kleine-Gemeinders*, it will be remembered, were the first of the Russian immigrants to arrive in Manitoba in 1874. They located on the East Reserve, but, finding the land in that region unsatisfactory, a number of them moved west of the Red along Scratching river, near the present town of Morris. In the same year another group of the same party, influenced largely by Cornelius Jansen, left their fellows at Buffalo and found their way to Jefferson county, Nebraska. This congregation has since been abandoned, most of the members

³ The recent Russian immigrants were from both of the Russian branches, the so-called *Alt-Kirchliche* and the *Bruederge-meinde*. The latter have joined their American brethren of the same faith, while the former are inclined to affiliate with the General Conference branch.

having left for southwestern Kansas and California. In Manitoba the *Holdemanites* have made some inroads upon the membership of the church, so that there are only a few congregations left. The total membership of the group on both sides of the international boundary line is about thirteen hundred. They remain very conservative, though Sunday schools and young people's meetings are among the "new" things recently tolerated.

The Krimmer-Brethren, sometimes locally known as the *Wiebe* church after their pioneer elder Jacob Wiebe, as already noted, established the only Mennonite village in Kansas in 1874. They are quite similar to the Mennonite Brethren in their religious practises, both being immersionist, highly emotional, and fervently evangelistic in their worship. Most of their diversions in the early days on the raw prairies took a decidedly religious turn. On Sunday they held meetings morning, noon, and night, with prayer meetings during the week in the homes. Revivals were frequent, fervid and well attended.

They were strict disciplinarians of both the conduct and appearance of their members. The sale of tobacco and liquor was prohibited in their village at a time when a free use of both was not regarded as a major sin by most of the other Russian Mennonite groups. Young people were carefully chaperoned by their elders in all their gatherings both social and religious. Sunday schools were held in the afternoon so as to minimize the possibility of desecrating the Sabbath by any less worthy activities. Marriage outside the church even with another branch of the denomination was strictly prohibited. Dress regulations likewise were strict. As late as 1905 a conference resolution discouraged worldliness in superfluous dress, excessive buying of land, attendance at theatres and circuses, carrying guns, hail insurance, and voting—all of which were proven sinful by copious Scripture quotations.

Although somewhat more liberal today the Krimmer-Brethren are still one of the most conservative of the branches of the Mennonite denomination. They have their own church paper, and numerous mission stations both foreign and home. The membership today is about twenty-five hundred, found principally in Kansas, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, and several other western states.

Small scattered bands and individuals here and there of the Mennonite Brethren group were found in most of the first settlements of the Russian Mennonites in the United States. Although these groups occasionally found one another and held religious worship in the homes, in general there was little of organized church activity among them. With the coming of elder Abraham Shellenberg, however, in 1879 the church was organized, and more aggressive work began in the interests of church extension. Scattered members were gathered into congregations, revival meetings were held, and there was a good deal of proselyting among the other Mennonite groups. By 1887 the membership had reached twelve hundred and sixty-six, scattered all through the various Mennonite communities.

The Mennonite-Brethren place special stress upon the need of a definite religious experience in conversion, are highly evangelistic and emotional in their religious worship, practise immersion backward, and also footwashing in connection with their communion service. They have received most of their additions both in Russia and America from the older church. Being strict immersionists, they fraternize freely with the Baptists, preferring Baptist theological seminaries to all others for that reason; and have lost some members to them. Because of their emotionalism, their religious credulity, and their craving for new religious experiences continually, they have been more readily victimized by unhealthy religious move-

ments of various kinds than have the more stable and composed General Conference group. In certain localities they have lost heavily to the Adventists and other more or less fanatical sects.

Conferences, held annually and well attended by both laymen and ministers, play an important role in the religious life of the membership. In a session held in 1900 the following practises were discouraged—writing foolish articles and jokes for the newspapers; attending weddings of members with unconverted partners, and participation in law suits. Later sessions went on record against life insurance, marriage of cousins, and Fourth of July celebrations. As a substitute for the latter it was suggested that “something better” be offered the young people for that day, missionary festivals for example. The church in America is still more conservative than were their brethren in Russia before 1918, the time of the collapse of Russia, and the decline of Mennonitism in that unhappy land.

For several years, beginning in 1898, their educational interests were served by a “German Department” in McPherson College, a Dunkard and immersionist institution, which had conference support. In 1908, however, a separate school was founded, Tabor College at Hillsboro, Kansas, which is now a junior college. The chief center of the church is still Kansas and Oklahoma, with a number of congregations also in Nebraska, California, and other western states. Large additions have been made in western Canada by the coming of the recent Russian immigrants already members of this branch.

The Church of God (Holdemanite), it will be recalled, had its origin as a small offshoot from the Old Mennonite congregation in Wayne county, Ohio, led by John Holdeman, who, in the early seventies, moved to Kansas with his family and the entire church membership. He ar-

rived here just in time to take up the leadership of the spiritually disorganized followers of Tobias Unruh at a critical time of their existence. By extending them both material and spiritual help at the time of their greatest need, he succeeded in gaining a large following among them for his new church organization. Later a number of additions were made from the *Kleine Gemeinde* following in Manitoba. And so, this group, although of a non-Russian native American origin, yet is almost exclusively composed of the descendants of these two Russian immigrant parties. A recent Year Book gives their total membership as three thousand. They are still distinguished from their neighbors by beards, collarless and tieless shirts, and the supposed objection to "the taking of usury."

The *Evangelical Mennonite Brethren* is the name of a small branch of Russian Mennonites who had their origin in two small congregations, one in Nebraska, the other in Minnesota, both led by ministers a bit more conservative and considerably more independent and individualistic than their fellows. Isaac Peters, an intelligent, though aggressive and conservative leader of the *Porde-nau* congregation, was exiled from Russia in 1874 because of his active participation in the emigration movement. In Nebraska he became a member of the *Henderson* congregation, but because he thought the majority of the membership too much addicted to what he called worldly practices, including the use of tobacco, he, together with a small group who agreed with him, withdrew from the membership of the congregation, thus starting an independent church, which for a time favored affiliation with the American Old Mennonites, though the union was never completed.

Aaron Wall was a member of the first church organized by Wilhelm Ewert in Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

Because he opposed the introduction of Sunday schools and other progressive measures, and like Peters, also objected to the use of tobacco among his members he, too, withdrew from his congregation. His following was known for a good many years as the *Bruderthalers*. In 1910 these two congregations, *Bruderthalers* and Peters, united their forces under the rather pretentious title of the "Defenseless Mennonites of North America." Gradually several other independent congregations and daughter colonies joined the original organization. For a time largely, no doubt, because of a similarity in name and partly because of similar beliefs and practises, this branch affiliated in mission work especially with the older Defenseless Mennonites of Illinois. But this connection has since been broken. They are now known as the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, and have lost much of their distinctive peculiar conservatism, differing little from the other progressive groups.

The Hutterites

To these various groups of Russian Mennonite immigrants should be added another, which, although not of direct Mennonite origin, yet have shared many of their peculiar religious experiences through the centuries, including the immigration from Russia—namely the Hutterites. These Hutterites, as already noted, being strongly non-resistant, decided to cast their lot with that of the Mennonites in the American venture. They came in three groups—nearly one hundred families all told—two groups in 1874, the one the *Bonhomme* locating west of Yankton, on the Missouri; and the other, the *Wolf Creek*, on the lower James. The third group, the *Elm Spring*, arrived in 1876 and established its settlement farther up the latter river.

Here these three groups each bought several thousand

acres of land in as secluded a region as possible along the river, and established a communistic *Bruderhof* as they called their independent communities. In Europe the Hutterites had mixed agriculture with industry, but in Dakota, since there were no markets for industrial products, they confined themselves almost entirely to farming for which they needed large land areas. They preferred to locate along a river bank because milling was always an important side line with them. Population increase among them has been rapid. The original three Bruderhofs have since increased to thirty with a total population of about three thousand, most of which is now found in Canada. Early expansion was up the James river, with only one Bruderhof of twelve families following the traditional course westward, locating in Montana. During the late war, because of their refusal to do military service and to buy liberty bonds, the Dakota Hutterites were severely mistreated by some of their superpatriotic fellow citizens. Their cattle and sheep were driven off and sold, and many of the Hutterites suffered personal indignities. As a result of this treatment most of the Bruderhofs were sold usually at a great sacrifice to the owners, and, beginning in 1918, were moved to Alberta and Manitoba. Today, of the thirty colonies only five are left in the United States.

Each Bruderhof is a complete, independent almost self-sufficing economic and social unit, consisting of from fifteen to thirty families living together in a large house built dormitory like, and substantially of stone if possible. All eat in a common dining room which is also used as an assembly room each evening for devotional services and business meetings before retiring. There is no private property, or income, or choice of occupation. The whole economic life is directed by a superintendent, generally locally known now as "Boss," who is elected for good

behavior by the men of the colony. He directs the work of each member, has charge of all the income, and makes all the disbursements. All earnings go into the common treasury. No one has even any spending money unless he can beg it from the Boss. The main Boss is assisted by a number of department heads such as the Farm Boss, Pig Boss, Duck Boss, Cow Boss, etc.

There is no idleness. Everybody works at something. The teacher, miller, tanner, if any, and other highly specialized occupations were permanent appointments, but the common workers periodically exchanged their tasks. The main occupation has been farming though each Bruderhof specializes in some side line. Each colony is likely to have a mill, and all engaged in sheep raising; Bonhomme stressed fishing before they left the banks of the Missouri; Wolf creek in broom making; another makes much of raising pigeons which find a fancy price in the city markets.

Small children are taken care of in a common nursery; the older ones are sent to school until fourteen, when they are supposed to take their place in the economic order of the community. Until the state and provincial laws set up certain standards, the school program was simple, consisting of reading, writing, a little arithmetic, Bible and instruction in some of the practical arts. Teachers were selected from the colony and poorly trained usually. The language was Tyrolean German. Now, however, teachers must teach in English and must meet the state requirements. In case no one from the colony meets these requirements some outside teacher must be employed which has frequently occurred since the late war, though the young men of the colony are increasingly preparing themselves for this task.

In their religious practises the Hutterites are still decidedly conservative. Preachers are selected by lot and

have no special training. Sermons are read from a book of sermons in manuscript form in the German language. Peter Riedeman's *Confession of Faith*, printed in Germany in 1562, and published for the first time in America in 1902 is the basis of their church doctrine. Their hymns, largely martyr stories, dating back to the sixteenth century, are sung without notes, with the melody only, to tunes perhaps centuries old. The old hymn book printed only recently for the first time perhaps rivals the Amish *Ausbund* as the oldest hymn book still in use by any Christian church in the world.

The social contacts of the Hutterites with the outside world have been meager, and their knowledge of what is going on is very limited. Many of their social customs have been perpetuated from middle Europe, common centuries ago. Clothes are very plain; in some cases hooks and eyes are still retained; often still homemade, of a style ages old, always of a somber color. The great social event of the year is the wedding which lasts for several days and is usually staged in the fall after the harvest has been gathered. Courtship is not permitted officially until after the engagement has been announced from the pulpit. Formerly matches were made by the elders but today each young man is permitted to select his own bride. There are no bachelors nor spinsters nor many widowers in these Bruderhofs.

In their ecclesiastical government the Bruderhofs are not quite as independent as in their economic arrangements. Each colony has its own minister, and a group of them a common elder. These various elders from all the colonies frequently meet to discuss their common problems. And their decisions have considerable weight in all the Bruderhofs as is always the case in a deeply religious society. The minister always is a most important individual.

The American Hutterites have not only preserved much of their middle European religious and traditional culture, but in all their wanderings have retained their original racial strains with practically no addition since. All told, the entire Hutterite population today is the off-spring of about fifteen middle European families running back several hundred years—*Tschetter, Wollman, Maendl, Wipf, Stahl, Grosz, Walter, Knels, Wurz, Hofer, Kleinsasser, Glaenzer, Waldner, Decker, Entz*. It is interesting to note that of these only one comes from Moravia, the land of their origin, and one from Russia where they spent the last hundred years before their trek to America. None have been added in America. Most of the names are of Bohemian and Carinthian origin.

As an economic experiment Hutterite communism has been a success. Life was simple. No money was wasted on luxuries. There was never any unemployment. Relief was never needed. And there was no social security problem for old age. Surplus profits were large and were always invested in additional Bruderhofs for the rapidly expanding population. But this economic prosperity was bought at too high a price—the loss of all individual initiative, a rather low standard of social responsibility, and gross ignorance of the world about them. It is not likely that this Utopia will endure another four hundred years. Already there are signs especially among the young people of dissolution. The elders are complaining that it is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy their young people with their lot as contact with the outside world becomes more extensive. It is highly problematical whether even Christian communism, the most enduring of all types of communism, can survive long in America against the disintegrating influences of the automobile, the radio, rural delivery and compulsory high school attendance.

Not all the Hutterites who came to America in the seventies joined the Bruderhofs. Many settled from the beginning on separate farms. And not all have remained in the colonies since. It is estimated that there are about as many outside the Bruderhofs as in. Most of those that have forsaken the communal way of life have joined the Dakota Krimmer-Brethren and other conservative Mennonite groups.

Non-Russian Groups

In the meantime several other small groups of non-Russian European Mennonites joined their Russian brethren in settling our western prairies. These, too, have since joined the Western District as well as the General Conference. Among these was a small colony from the *Prussian* congregation of Heubuden. Although the new German imperial constitution of 1871 respected the non-combatant privileges granted the Mennonites in the Cabinet Order of 1868, yet there were still some German Mennonites, specially in the conservative Heubuden congregation who objected to any sort of service under military control, even though non-combatant, as being contrary to their religious convictions. It was this group, it will be remembered, that was represented by Wilhelm Ewert in the Committee of Twelve in 1873. Ewert himself and several others came to America to stay in 1874. In 1876 a score or more of families under the leadership of their elder Johan Andres left for America, spending the winter at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, where their elder died. The group divided the next spring, part of them locating in Kansas near Newton; and the others in Nebraska along the Blue near Beatrice. In the early eighties about a dozen families from the ill-fated Asiatic Chiva adventure joined this colony.

Mention should be made here, too, of the settlement

made by about seventy-five families from Galicia in the late eighties in Kansas and Minnesota. These *Galicians* it may be recalled were originally south Germans who had migrated to Galicia from Bavaria, Alsace and also Switzerland upon invitation by the Austrian Emperor Joseph near the close of the eighteenth century soon after the emperor fell heir to Galicia on the occasion of the first partitioning of Poland. About one-third of the party came to Kansas, and two-thirds to Minnesota.

About the same time, too, a number of families directly from Switzerland located near the Prussian colony at *Whitewater*, Kansas.

Population Growth

The Russian Mennonites on the plains of America, like their brethren on the steppes of Russia, increased rapidly in numbers. Land was plentiful and cheap; labor was in demand; marriages were early and frequent, and families were large. Population increase almost reached its biological limit. The eighteen thousand who arrived between 1873 and 1883, not counting of course the more recent immigrants since 1923, have since grown to some eighty-five thousand. The growth of church membership likewise was almost identical with that of the population. Their large compact, closed farm communities, with their German language and foreign customs kept their own children from leaving them, and others from joining. They held their own better than any other group in all Mennonite history save their own brethren in Russia before them, who lived much under the same pioneer conditions.

Although living a life apart from the rest of the world at first, many of the younger element among the Russian Mennonites, particularly of the second and third generations have played a creditable part in the political

and cultural development of the country. Peter Jansen of Beatrice, Nebraska, son of Cornelius, became a prominent rancher, and early entered the public life of his adopted state, being several times elected to the state legislature serving for a time as state senator. In 1896 he was a member from his state of the resolutions committee in the Republican National Convention which drafted the famous gold plank of that campaign. Several years later he was appointed by President McKinley as one of the commissioners to the World's Fair at Paris. A son of H. H. Ewert, founder of the Gretna, Canada school, was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, England, and is now a professor at that venerable University. A young man from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, Albert Penner, of the third generation, was for a time pastor at the famous Jonathan Edwards church at Northampton, Massachusetts, and as such he had ex-President Coolidge as a member, whose funeral sermon he preached.

All through the west men and women of German-Russian Mennonite parentage are holding positions of usefulness and influence in business, as public officials, school superintendents, college and university professors, and in other roles of public trust.

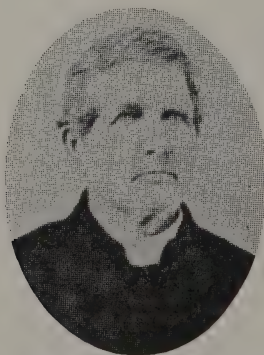
XIV

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

ORIGINS

The General Conference originally was not a separate branch of the denomination, but was a unification movement aiming at a union of all Mennonites in America. As a unification movement it had its source in three distinct local centers—in Pennsylvania, Ontario, and Iowa.

J. H. Oberholtzer and his followers, as already noted, after their expulsion from the Franconia Conference in



John H. Oberholtzer

1847, immediately organized themselves into a new religious body. Oberholtzer began a vigorous campaign for the spread of his cause. For the advancement of the

religious interests of the congregations which had cast their lot with his, he founded in his home town, Milford Square, the first Mennonite church paper in America called *Religioeser Botschafter*, later changed into *Das Christliche Volksblatt*. These papers he used to good advantage in advocating a closer union among a number of isolated Mennonite communities.

Although Oberholtzer was active in promoting the interests of the new movement, he had not entirely abandoned the hope of effecting a reconciliation with the old church. He sincerely desired a union, and as late as 1860 he suggested in a pamphlet called *Verantwortung und Erlaeuterung* the terms upon which the two groups of churches might come together. These terms, however, were rejected by the old church, and so no reconciliation was possible. At the same time, too, he was advocating through his church paper a union of all the Mennonite congregations of America.

In the meantime a liberal movement, similar in many respects to the one in Franconia had been making headway among a few of the scattered churches near Niagara Falls, in Lincoln county, Ontario, in behalf of more aggressive church work, especially of greater evangelistic efforts, under the leadership of a minister by the name of Daniel Hoch. In 1853, Hoch was appointed at a meeting of this group of churches as a visiting minister to various scattered congregations in the region. He also had come into contact evidently with a small congregation at Wadsworth, Ohio, composed of a few families, who had recently come there from Pennsylvania under the leadership of Reverend Ephraim Hunsberger, for in 1855 these two groups organized themselves into the *Conference Council of the Mennonite Communities of Canada-West and Ohio*. The purpose of the organization seems to have been to

promote greater evangelistic and missionary zeal among the churches.

Oberholtzer had taken a deep interest in the Canadian movement from the very beginning, for here might be an opportunity perhaps of enlarging the circle of congregations that favored a more liberal church policy, and the beginning of the realization of a dream which he already began to cherish, namely the unification of all the Mennonite churches of America. Consequently in the Volksblatt, in 1856, he advocated the union of the Canada-Ohio conference with his own Pennsylvania conference in the interests of the mission cause, and suggested a general council of the two conferences. This plan was favorably received by the Canada churches, and resolutions were passed by the Conference in its session of 1857 urging that steps be taken in this direction, but no further results followed at this time.

While this subject was being agitated in the East, a similar movement had begun in the West. In Lee county, Iowa, there were two small congregations composed largely of Bavarian and Palatinate immigrants who had come to the state some few years before. They were located near the Amish settlement, which had been made some time earlier. But being more recently from Europe than the Amish, and differing from them in customs and practises they never worked in harmony with them. Consequently these two congregations found themselves somewhat isolated from the other Iowa churches. Feeling the need of united effort especially in evangelistic work among such members of the church as had settled some distance from the main body, a joint meeting of the West Point and Zion congregations was brought about at West Point in 1859, largely through the influence of Daniel Krehbiel, who continued for the rest of his days

a most enthusiastic advocate of the unification cause. Another leader of the union movement for the Iowa churches was Christian Showalter, also a south German immigrant, and at this time a teacher in the parochial school at the Zion congregation. According to the resolutions passed at this meeting its purpose was to "devise ways on the one hand for the centralization of the Mennonite churches, but chiefly on the other for supplying isolated families with the Gospel blessings." The ideal of the union of all Mennonite churches seems to have captured the imagination of the leaders of the Lee county congregations also. Near the close of the meeting after an urgent plea by Daniel Krehbiel, it was decided to extend a general invitation to other Mennonite churches to meet with them in another conference at West Point the following year. The report of the initial meeting together with the invitation for the coming year were published in the Pennsylvania paper, the *Christliche Volksblatt*.

Oberholtzer naturally was also interested in the Iowa movement. During the year he repeatedly urged through the columns of his paper that both the Pennsylvania and the Canada congregations send representatives to the meeting in Lee county. Neither, however, seemed enthusiastic in responding to the invitation, and that for several reasons. In the first place Iowa at that time was on the frontier line of American civilization, and why should the eastern churches go so far west to attend a meeting the purpose of which was to form a union of congregations almost all of which were in the East. Secondly, the Iowans were recent European immigrants in whom the Easterners, whose ancestors had been in this country for more than a century, felt little personal interest. Neither of the eastern conferences appointed delegates to the western meeting. Hoch and Oberholtzer appeared to be the only individuals in the least inter-

ested in the enterprise, and it seemed extremely doubtful whether even they would be able to attend because of financial considerations. But finally at the last moment through the generosity of a friend it was made possible for Oberholtzer and one companion to be present. These two men were the only representatives at the meeting from the churches outside of the Iowa congregations.

The conference, if indeed it may be called such, was held May 28-29, 1860, near West Point, and was composed of the two congregations already named, another minister from a nearby settlement, and the two representatives from Pennsylvania. Oberholtzer was chosen chairman, and Christian Showalter, of the neighboring congregation, secretary. Although unpretentious and local in character, this meeting was not deterred by that fact from discussing a lofty and ambitious ideal, namely the unification of all the Mennonites of America under one working organization. Deploing the fact that there was so much factionalism among the Mennonites, and that the denomination "has never since its existence in America constituted an ecclesiastical organization," and further that because of this factionalism there is "a corresponding decline in spiritual life," the assembly drew up a set of resolutions which it was hoped would serve as a common platform upon which all might unite for the extension of the mission and other interests of the church. These resolutions are as follows:

1. That all branches of the Mennonite denomination in North America regardless of minor differences, should extend to each other the hand of fellowship.
2. That fraternal relations shall be severed only when a person or church abandons the fundamental doctrines of the denomination; namely, those concerning baptism, the oath, etc., as indeed all the principles of the faith which we with Menno base solely upon the Gospel as received from Jesus Christ and His apostles.

3. That no brother shall be found guilty of heresy unless his error can be established on unequivocal Scripture evidence.
4. That the General Conference shall consider no excommunication as Scripturally valid unless a real transgression or neglect conflicting with the demands of Scripture exists.
5. That every church or district shall be entitled to continue without molestation or hindrance and amenable only to their own conscience any rules or regulations they may have adopted for their own government; provided they do not conflict with the tenets of our general confession.
6. That if a member of a church, because of existing customs or ordinances in his church, shall desire to sever his connection and unite with some other church of the General Conference such action shall not be interfered with.

As just indicated, the motive for this united action was to provide for more effective evangelistic efforts, but two other subjects were also discussed during the meeting—the establishing of a publishing house and an institution for theological training. Both of these measures had been advocated for several years by such men as Oberholtzer, Hoch and Daniel Krehbiel, and these men were undoubtedly responsible for introducing them into the discussions at this time. After a two days' session, the assembly adjourned, but not before it was decided to meet again the following year at Wadsworth, Ohio.

Thus was launched the *General Conference of the Mennonite church of North America*. The aim of the movement was an ambitious but worthy one. Just how seriously the leaders of the cause at this time entertained the thought of a union of all the Mennonites it is not easy to say. It may be safely inferred, however, that none were so sanguine as to expect the fulfillment of the work in their own day, for such a task would have been an impossible one. The gap between the opposite extremes of Mennonite custom and practise of that time was too wide

to be bridged over easily. But a union of some of the more liberal of the older American Mennonite churches and a number of the recent immigrant congregations was entirely feasible, and the leaders of the movement undoubtedly hardly hoped to see more than that much of their plan accomplished in their own day. The dozen or so of the Pennsylvania congregations of course would likely come into the union, as would also a number of the South German churches in Summerfield, Illinois, and Hayesville and Cleveland, Ohio, all of whom were bound to the Lee county people by ties of kinship. The Wadsworth congregation of liberal Pennsylvanians would also be likely to join the movement. And so would the two or three Canadian congregations under the influence of Hoch. But beyond these scattered congregations there was not a strong probability that many others could be secured for the cause in the immediate future. And yet this time was more opportune, perhaps, than any later period would have been for attempting such a program. For none of the Alsatian Amish churches nor the older Mennonite churches in Ohio, Illinois and Iowa had as yet formed themselves into conference districts. Each congregation was independent of all others and some had already departed somewhat from the older traditions and customs. A few of these in more recent years have affiliated themselves with the movement, but after the organization of conferences of their own and especially after they came under the influence of the conservative elements of the East the probability of an affiliation with the General Conference had passed. The growth of the movement has since been confined largely to isolated congregations of later Russian and Swiss Mennonites and other scattered congregations.

The General Conference, however, was hardly a fact as yet in 1860. Neither the Canada-Ohio Council, nor the

few other independent congregations which it was hoped might be brought into line had accepted the first invitation. It remained to be seen what action these would take at the next meeting at Wadsworth.

This session, the second to be held, met at Wadsworth, Medina county, Ohio, May 20, 1861, in the very days of the opening of the Civil war. It was soon found that the unification movement was taking root, for now eight congregations were represented, including in addition to those present the year before, those at Waterloo, Ontario, Summerfield, Illinois, and several of the Oberholtzer following in Pennsylvania. Daniel Hoch of Canada, and Daniel Hege of Summerfield were elected chairman and secretary respectively. Two new subjects were discussed at this meeting. A new article discouraging secret societies was added to the platform adopted the year before, and the first steps were taken toward the establishing of a theological school. Daniel Hege, a well educated minister of the Summerfield congregation, was appointed as home evangelist and was authorized to visit all the churches in the interest of missions and the new school. After signing a formal unification agreement, the assembly adjourned to meet again, the time and place to be decided by the chairman and secretary. The conference was now a fact. After this, sessions were held regularly, at first biennially, but later triennially.

CONTINUED GROWTH

The third meeting was held in Summerfield in 1863. The chief discussion at this time concerned the proposed school, and further steps were taken toward its organization. Triennial meetings were agreed upon and also a method of representation according to the size of the affiliated congregation. From this time on the Confer-

ence maintained a steady growth. Nearly every succeeding meeting showed a gain in the number of affiliating congregations. At first, of course, the new additions came from the Pennsylvania Oberholtzer churches. But in 1875 the Swiss congregation at Berne, Indiana, was represented for the first time by S. F. Sprunger. And the following year at a special session the first Russian church, the Alexanderwohl congregation, was represented by Henry Richert and David Goerz. Twenty congregations were present by delegates at this session. After this most of the additions came from the recent Russian immigrant churches whose sympathies had been won to the leaders of the General Conference movement both because of the help they had received in settling in their new home and also because of their interest in the cause of missions, an interest which was shared by a number of the Russian churches. The meeting of 1893 was held at Bluffton, Ohio. For the first time the Swiss churches at Bluffton and Dalton, Ohio, and the Amish congregations at Trenton, Ohio, and Noble, Iowa, sent delegates. Fifty churches were represented at this meeting, eighteen coming from Kansas. Each succeeding session now recorded some new additions either from the Russians or some other isolated congregations which for various reasons had not become identified with any of the other special Mennonite conferences which were being formed in the meantime. In the early nineties there seemed a fair possibility of winning a number of the congregations of the present Central Conference to the movement, but with the founding in 1899 of a separate organization of these churches, that source of additions was closed for the time. In recent years numerous additions have come from the new Russian immigrants to Canada. The last General Conference session held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1938 reported an entire mem-

bership of approximately 36,000, with 170 congregations, sixteen new ones having been added in Canada since the last session.

Among the men, in addition to those already mentioned, who played an important part in the early formative period of the movement must be mentioned A. B. Shelly of Pennsylvania, president of the Conference continuously from 1872 to 1896, and interested in all its various lines of work; Christian Krehbiel, of Summerfield, Illinois, but later from Halstead, Kansas, a south German immigrant, interested in the Russian immigration, and one of the leaders in the Indian mission cause; David Goerz, a Russian immigrant, and one of the leaders in bringing the Russians into the General Conference; Henry Richert, from the Alexanderwohl congregation, also a leader among the Russians; J. C. Krehbiel, chairman of the first meeting in 1859 at West Point, and a member of many important committees later; S. F. Sprunger of Berne, Indiana; Ben Eicher, leader of the Amish churches in Henry county, Iowa; Daniel Hege, the first home evangelist and collector of funds for the Wadsworth school; C. J. van der Smitten, theological professor at Wadsworth, and later secretary of the Mission Board; J. S. Moyer of Pennsylvania; John S. Hirschler of Kansas; A. S. Shelley, prominent in the Eastern Pennsylvania District Conference, and editor for many years of the *Mennonite*; J. B. Baer, promoter of the mission cause and early evangelist; and N. B. Grubb, pioneer pastor of the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia, founder of the *Mennonite*, and serving for many years on many important committees. A number of young men still living and active have done much for the General Conference in recent years, but it is left for some future historian to estimate the value of their contributions.

The Wadsworth School

The two questions that occupied much of the time and thought of the Conference during the first twenty years of the history of the movement were education and missions. The school at Wadsworth held the center of interest from 1863, when the first committee was appointed until 1878, when it was forced to close its doors. It took six years after Daniel Hege began to collect funds in 1862, before the school was opened. The institution which was known as *The Christian Educational Institution of the Mennonite Denomination* was located at Wadsworth, Ohio, which was thought to be the most centrally located between the East and the West. It opened its doors on January 2, 1868, with Christian Showalter, of Iowa, as principal, one other teacher, and twenty-four students. Its purpose was primarily to train young men for Christian work, although secular subjects were also taught. During the same year C. J. van der Smitten from Friedrichstadt, Germany, was called to the chair of theology with the assurance that the position was to last the rest of his natural life.

The course of study covered three years. Prospective students were admitted by examination, and no qualifications were prescribed other than a good character and an age limit between eighteen and thirty.

The instruction was to be principally in the German language, even the Pennsylvanians at this time using that language exclusively in their religious worship, and Pennsylvania Dutch in their social intercourse. The school was for boys only. Early in its history, the Pennsylvania churches suggested that it be made co-educational, but the Germans from the west and especially the German bred "theological professor" van der Smitten, and his wife opposed the suggestion so strongly that

women were never admitted. Practical living and high thinking evidently were to be combined. For each student was to spend three hours each day in some sort of "manual labor" for the sake of his mental and physical health and for the benefit of the institution. That this program was carried out is evidenced by glancing through a random list of assignments by the steward for one day. On this particular day one person was to do stable work; two were to peel potatoes; two were to carry wood to the kitchen, and another was to take a wagon to the village blacksmith; still another was to fasten the wash line; three were to work at carpentering, and two at shoe-making; two persons were to saw wood, and one to borrow the saw from one of the townsmen; one was to go for the mail and another to take meat to Hunsbergers to be smoked; while all the rest were to cut wood. This was one day's assignment. Thus it was hoped that expenses might be kept down. But the cost of getting an education was not high at its best. For the sum of one hundred dollars per year the student was entitled to "instruction, board, lodging, washing, fuel and light."

The school never prospered. The attendance hardly ever went beyond that of the opening day. It began with a deficit in the building fund, and poor financing handicapped its work throughout its entire career. Although there were only three teachers, expenses could hardly be met. Besides financial difficulties there were quarrels within the faculty. Showalter and van der Smissen did not agree upon matters of policy, and the former finally resigned, leaving to the latter the entire management of the educational policy of the institution. Finally the churches of the West and those of Pennsylvania disagreed as to certain questions of management, with the result that the school had to close with a heavy debt, a theological professor hired for life, and but few students in 1878, just

ten years after the first students had entered its doors for instruction. This experiment in higher education, however, was not a complete failure. Many of the later leaders of the church received their initial training in this pioneer Mennonite institution.

The Wadsworth school was the last educational enterprise undertaken directly by the General Conference. Such later schools as were established were sponsored either by district conferences or by private initiative.

The Mission Interest

In its other major objective, the mission cause, the General Conference was more successful though equally slow in getting started. Although founding of a missionary society was one of the first official acts of the Conference, it was some time before any actual missionary work was undertaken. S. S. Haury, a graduate of the Wadsworth school, became the first volunteer, but the Conference remained undecided for a number of years both as to the location of a mission station and the best means of establishing the work. After some communication with the Mennonite society in Amsterdam with a view to supporting their work in the East Indies, it was finally decided to form an independent mission enterprise, and to begin the work among the American Indians. S. S. Haury and J. B. Baer were sent on an extended trip through Alaska looking for a desirable field for Indian mission work, but after a preliminary survey, and finding the Alaskan field already well occupied by the Presbyterians, they returned still undecided as to a definite location. Finally, by 1880, Haury and his wife established the first American Mennonite mission, then called a foreign mission, among the Arapahoe Indians in what was then Indian Territory, but now Oklahoma.

The General Conference was the first branch of the

Mennonite church to carry on missionary effort among the American Indians, and this work has always played an important part in their missionary enterprise. Later on, stations were established among the Cheyennes in the Old Indian territory and in Montana, as well as among the Hopis in Arizona. In all these centers, effective work among the Indians is still being continued, though with considerable difficulty in Arizona where the Indian tribal life has been abandoned for special farm allotments, and where the former compact settlements are becoming more widely scattered. In addition to S. S. Haury, as the pioneer missionary, special mention should be made, among a number of other veterans, of two men, who were outstanding not only as missionaries but also for their research into the folklore and languages of the Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes, H. R. Voth and Rodolphe Petter. The results of Voth's ethnological studies among the Arapahoes was published in a number of volumes, and together with a rare collection of relics is now to be found in the Field Columbian Museum in Chicago. Voth and several other missionaries in this field reduced the Arapahoe language to writing and have made many translations into it. Rodolphe Petter's work has been among the Cheyennes. For nearly fifty years he has been working on a dictionary of the Cheyenne language, and has also translated nearly the entire Bible into that tongue. He is regarded by the officials of the Smithsonian Institute as the best authority on the Cheyenne language in America.

Mission work abroad was begun in India in 1900, and grew out of relief work carried on under Conference direction in the famine stricken districts several years before. The first missionaries were P. A. Penner and J. F. Kroeker and their wives. At first missionary effort was limited largely to evangelism and to taking care of the

children left orphans by the famine; but since then increased attention has been given to both educational and industrial work, and especially to the care of lepers. An outstanding leader in this field is P. A. Penner, who has been in continual service for nearly forty years, during which time he has established the second largest, and one of the finest leper asylums in all India, for which he has been given generous government support and the highest praise by the British inspectors. Somewhat later a mission station was established in China. The Conference also sponsors several home missions in the cities, though many of these are the direct responsibility of the local district conferences.

The General Conference today supports about one hundred missionaries on the field with an annual budget of approximately \$100,000.

Not a Separate Division

It will be observed that the General Conference of Mennonites is not a separate branch of the denomination, or at least that is not its aim. It has never forsaken the objectives of its original sponsors—a union of the various Mennonite groups into a common working organization for the promotion of common church interests, missions, education and publication. To make the attainment of this goal possible the slight differences which separated the groups had to be minimized, and only the fundamentals of Mennonitism upon which all could still agree could be emphasized. The sessions of the Conference have remained almost entirely advisory, with discipline left to the local Districts.

These objectives are well stated by H. P. Krehbiel, the chief historian of the movement:

“The churches constituting the General Conference have by

their union not become something different from what they were before. Each church remains just what it was, and retains all the peculiarities she had if she chooses. Each church retains her individuality as well as her independence. It is not a separate class or division of Mennonites which may be distinguished from others by special doctrines or customs. It is impossible to class the Conference as such a division because her membership list contains churches which differ very much in customs and special views, and which to this day retain these differences precisely as they did previously to uniting with the Conference. The General Conference is therefore in no sense a branch or division of the denomination."

And yet, although the General Conference aims to be merely an advisory body, and a convenient means for furthering common religious efforts, the fact that it must necessarily set up definite qualifications for admission to membership into the union gives it somewhat the character of a separate ecclesiastical body. The revised constitution of 1929 prescribes as a test of membership that the congregations which unite with the Conference "hold fast to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism on confession of faith, the avoidance of oaths, the Biblical doctrine of non-resistance, and the practice of a Scriptural church discipline." An earlier constitution, that of 1896, contained the added stipulation that congregations tolerating members of secret societies and those addicted to the drink evil should be barred from membership in the Conference, a regulation that is still in force theoretically, though not rigidly applied.

In recent years there has been a growing tendency on the part of certain of the more conservative element to transform the loose confederation of 1860 into a firmer union with more definite doctrinal commitments and disciplinary powers over individual congregations. In 1902 the Cornelis Ris Confession was officially published and

recommended for general use among the churches. Out of the lodge controversy, too, has arisen a standing committee on Doctrine and Conduct which must attempt to justify its existence not only by encouraging sentiment against the lodge, but also by recommending from time to time the enforcement of certain other doctrinal views. Recently, too, an attempt was made to secure the adoption of a new confession of faith, but it failed to receive the required votes among the congregations that were necessary to carry. Thus far the activities of this committee have been confined largely to recommendations unheeded.

Theologically Conservative

Theologically, the churches of the General Conference are as conservative as those of other branches of the denomination, but are more tolerant in their practises, and less suspicious and exclusive, with little hesitation to affiliate with other churches religiously, especially the different Mennonite groups as well as churches of other Protestant denominations. Socially, too, they are not as fearful of contamination by the outside world as some of their more conservative brethren. They have no dress restrictions, and do not prescribe the recreational life of their members as guardedly as some of the other branches. While the Old Mennonite conferences in recent years took special pains to warn their members against attending World Fairs and similar worldly enterprises, the General Conference in its session at Bluffton in 1933, seriously considered near the end of a rather long session the advisability of closing a day earlier than the program had originally provided for in order to give the western delegates an opportunity to attend the World's Fair at Chicago.

Conference Organization

The Conference meets every three years and is composed of delegates elected by the participating congregations which are given voting power according to the size of their individual membership. The sessions are devoted largely to the discussion of reports from the various standing Boards—Missions, Education, Publication and Emergency Relief, and such temporary committees as have been appointed for special purposes. The congregations composing the General Conference are in turn grouped into six district conferences, all distinct from one another—the Eastern, Middle, Northern, Pacific, Canadian, and the Western District which is by far the largest. The church government is congregational, each minister usually being an elder; that is, having full power to administer all the religious rites demanded by the church. There are no superior officers.

As already noted, the support of the mission cause has remained a chief concern of the Conference.

Further Educational Efforts

As to education, after the failure of the Wadsworth experiment, the Conference officially washed its hands of any constructive effort toward the establishing of any school enterprise. The Board of Education, in spite of its imposing title, had few duties other than to gather statistics and to make suggestions that were seldom acted upon. In recent years, however, it has taken up seriously again the question of cooperating with several other branches of the denomination in the founding of a union theological seminary. It is becoming increasingly clear to a number of the leaders of the Conference that its preservation depends largely upon a united leadership vitally interested in the fundamentals of Mennonitism;

and that such a leadership cannot be expected from a ministry that gets its training from a variety of sources, ranging all the way from the ultra conservative and unwholesome teaching of some of the small Bible schools in the land, most of them quite militaristic and somewhat fanatical in their espousal of a militant millenarianism, to the ultra liberalism of the large University dominated theological seminaries, many of which retain but little of the essence of orthodox Christian doctrine. The greatest need of the General Conference today, as of all Mennonitism, is undoubtedly a Mennonite theological seminary.

The Publication Board has published a number of books, tracts, the two church papers, the *Mennonite* and the *Christliche Bundesbote*, Sunday school supplies, and hymn books, and has at present under consideration the establishing of their own publishing house and printing shop.

Emergency Relief

The congregations of the General Conference, together with the other Mennonite groups, have been most generous in the support of their famine stricken and persecuted brethren in Russia since the late war; but most of this work has been carried on through cooperative organizations such as the *Mennonite Central Committee*, the *Canadian Colonization Board* and other Mennonite relief agencies. The special *Emergency Relief* committee of the General Conference has not done much individual work except to urge the support of these larger and more general committees.

Peace Testimony

The General Conference, and especially the Russian contingent, has always been vitally interested in the

preservation of the traditional Mennonite peace principles, although the subsidiary district conferences, especially the Western District have been more active in promoting the cause. During the war when hundreds of Mennonite young men were drafted into the army the General Conference in its session held at Reedley, California in 1917, appointed a committee of seven to cooperate with the district committees and similar organizations of other branches of the church to present to the government a united statement of Mennonite peace principles, as well as to aid the young men in the service to adapt themselves to the demands of the exemption law, and appear in their behalf before the military authorities both in Washington and the various camps, the latter of whom too often were ignorant of the terms of the exemption law, and thoroughly out of sympathy with the principles of its beneficiaries.

The war experiences convinced the leaders that more positive teaching of peace doctrines was necessary than had prevailed before. A special Peace Committee was added to the other committees of the Conference, which has since done effective service for the cause in the way of publishing peace tracts, holding peace meetings, furnishing regular peace lessons for the Sunday school quarterlies, cooperating with other non-resistant groups, especially the Quakers and Dunkards, in peace conventions and institutes, and in many other ways keeping the cause of peace continually before the church. In this work H. P. Krehbiel has done pioneer work. The present chairman of the Peace Committee of the General Conference is E. L. Harshbarger of Bethel College.

Affiliation with the Federal Council

For a short period, from 1908 to 1917, the Mennonite General Conference was affiliated with the Federal Coun-

cil of Churches. But after 1914 the growing militarism developing in the Federal Council aroused a good deal of opposition among some of the peace loving Mennonites to the continuance of the connection. A special committee was appointed to study the question. This committee, reporting to the 1917 session, and disagreeing on its findings, gave a majority and minority report, the majority favoring the continuation of the affiliation. But a vote before the conference favored the minority report and the connection with the Federal Council was discontinued. Among other charges brought against the Federal Council at this time were the liberal attitude of many of the members of the organization to "higher criticism, secret societies, and modernism in theology."

Shift to the West

During the early years the whole Conference movement was dominated by the influence of the eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites, but in course of time with the addition of a large number of congregations of the Russian contingent the control has gradually shifted to the west. Of the one hundred and seventy congregations today in the conference only forty are located east of the Mississippi. Both of the church papers have recently been taken to Newton, Kansas, and the new printing establishment when purchased will be located in the same center. All the officers of the Executive Committee of the conference at present are from the west. Of the seventy-one members of the various Boards only nine come from the eastern half of the territory. This shift of control to the more recent European arrivals from both Russia and Germany accounts largely for the fact that both the German language and culture is much more prevalent among the General Conference than among the other Mennonite groups. Fortunately this shift of control has not weak-

ened but rather strengthened the cause of peace among the American Mennonites; for the Mennonites from Russia, with the possible exception of some of the more recent arrivals, having migrated to America largely because of their scruples against war, are more peace minded than many of the older groups.

Prospects of the Unification Movement

The movement for union along the lines laid down by the General Conference has not made much headway among the more conservative wings of the older American Mennonites. Old traditions and customs are too strongly entrenched among these, and they are too well organized now to be greatly influenced in the near future by any progressive movement outside their own body. Certain influences, however, have made for a measure of unification here and there in recent years. As noted elsewhere the Amish-Mennonites and the Old Mennonites have now united their forces in a common organization; the Central Conference and the Defenseless Mennonites carry on a joint missionary enterprise; the Krimmer Brethren and the Mennonite Brethren cooperate in their educational work; Bluffton College in 1914, was sponsored by four different Mennonite groups, which have since been reduced to two, however; in 1935 the official organ of the Central Conference, the *Christian Evangel*, merged for a short time with the General Conference paper, the *Mennonite*. Significant, too, is the *All-Mennonite* convention which has been meeting triennially since 1913 and still has the support of most of the more progressive branches of the denomination.

The spirit of cooperation has been especially strong in times of need and distress or in behalf of a great philanthropic enterprise. During the war all the branches,

from the most conservative Old Order Amish to the progressive General Conference, worked together most harmoniously in the interests of their common non-resistant faith, while the great need of the Russian Mennonites since the late war called forth the heartiest support and the widest genuine cooperation once more of all Mennonites. The General Conference has been sympathetic toward all these various unification movements, and welcomes every effort that promotes the objectives of the founders of the Conference. A special committee on Church Unity has been appointed to encourage this cause.

Outside of the possible addition of a number of congregations from the recent Russian immigrants to Canada, growth by individual congregations may have reached its limit. May it not be possible that in the future there may be an amalgamation of separate conferences and groups that have little to divide them. As the young people come up through the high schools and especially the Mennonite colleges into the leadership of the future it may finally dawn upon some of them that if they wish to preserve what is worthwhile of Mennonitism, and which they all still have in common, it will be necessary to overlook insignificant details like the cut of a coat, or the specific number of times an applicant for baptism is dipped into the water, whether once or three times, or the intensity of a religious emotion. A united Mennonitism will come with a more enlightened church leadership, and that must come from our common colleges and a common theological seminary.

XV

A FINAL TREK IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

CANADA

The Russian *Studien Kommission* of 1920, spoken of elsewhere, after visiting the United States, Mexico and Canada, finally decided that under existing conditions, the last country held out the best prospects as a refuge for their persecuted brethren. A. A. Friesen, a member of the commission, remained in Canada, and later played an important role in all the early phases of the immigration movement. But even here there were difficulties in the way, the most formidable, seemingly, being the Order in Council of 1919, still in force, forbidding the immigration of Mennonites into the Dominion.

But the Canadian Mennonites, their hearts filled with compassion for their suffering Russian co-religionists, and determined to help them escape from their hard lot at any cost, were not dismayed by seemingly impossible barriers.

The Canadian General Conference in its annual session at Herbert, Saskatchewan, in 1921, appointed H. H. Ewert as a delegate to cooperate with H. A. Neufeld, representing the Mennonite Brethren, and S. F. Coffman, of the Old Mennonites, and A. A. Friesen, in a visit to the Dominion capital at Ottawa in an attempt to secure a repeal of the Order in Council in question. Fortunate for the immigration cause, just at this time, was the victory in the general elections of this year of the Liberal party;

and the election as prime minister of the Dominion government of William Lyon MacKensie-King, who, having lived in Kitchener, Ontario, as a young man, was well acquainted with the Old Mennonites of that region, and for whom he had a high regard.

With the aid of the new prime minister, the objectionable Order in Council was soon rescinded, and the door was thrown wide open for the admission of the Russian Mennonites. There were several conditions, however. The immigrants must settle on the land; they must not become a burden to the state; and they must pass a rigorous health test at the European port of embarkation.

The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization

In the meantime, for the purpose of aiding the proposed immigration movement, the different branches of the Canadian Mennonite church formed an organization which they called the *Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization*, with David Toews, of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, as its president and chief promoter.

But permission to enter the country was only the first step in the movement to bring over the thousands of Russian Mennonite prospects who were eager to exchange the terrors of their native soil for the promised land of Canada. Nearly all of the prospective immigrants, having been completely stripped of all their possessions by the Russian Bolsheviks, had scarcely enough money left with which to buy their passports, to say nothing about the means for covering the expenses of their ocean transportation.

After considering various financial schemes, none of which seemed promising at first, the Colonization Board finally turned to the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company, with its extensive railway system, its fleet of ocean steamers, and vast stretches of uncultivated prairie lands,

as offering the most likely source of help for carrying out an extended immigration and settlement project. Here again the Board was fortunate in finding a sympathetic friend in Col. J. S. Dennis, Chief Commissioner of the railroad company's department of Immigration and Development, who as a young man in his twenties, had been officially connected with that other migration of Russian Mennonites to Manitoba some fifty years before; and who remembered the valuable service rendered by these pioneers in the settling of the raw prairies of that province.

Help from the Canadian Pacific

Through the efforts of Colonel Dennis, and President Beatty, who likewise was friendly to the project, the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company agreed to finance the whole enterprise on the condition that the Colonization Board enter a contract promising to repay the railroad company the whole transportation expense within eighteen months after the arrival of the immigrants. The first contract called for the transportation of three thousand persons from the Black Sea to Winnipeg at \$140.00 per person, counting up all told well toward half a million dollars.

The officers of the Board did not see where this amount of money was to come from; and such Mennonites as feared that the action of the Board might obligate the entire Mennonite church, were bitterly opposed to the whole scheme. But the Canadian Pacific insisted on the signing of the contract before a single Mennonite could be brought across. Reverend Toews then, as president of the Board, his heart filled with compassion for his suffering Russian brethren, on his own initiative, fully aware that the contract could not be carried out within the specified time, blindly signed the agreement, trusting

Providence for the results. Providence did not fail him. It appeared a little later that the railroad company could not fulfill its part of the contract either, especially that part which called for the embarkation of the Mennonites from a Black Sea port, due to certain disease epidemics then prevalent in that area. The Canadian Pacific, therefore, did not demand that the Board live up to the letter of the bond, postponing from time to time the due date for the repayment of the transportation expenses; and at the same time even entering into new contracts for further immigration quotas.

Just how to provide for the temporary needs of these large groups of penniless refugees, and start them out on the road of self-support even after they did arrive here was another problem that taxed the faith and ingenuity of Reverend Toews and his co-workers to the uttermost. How would the Canadian Mennonites, many of whom, as just indicated, were lukewarm on the whole enterprise, react to the assumption of this added burden? These were matters of grave concern to the leaders of the movement.

Great was the satisfaction, therefore, of these men when upon the arrival at Rosthern, on July 22, 1923, of the first train load of some six hundred Russians, more than enough automobiles, buggies and wagons from the large Mennonite settlements nearby were on hand to welcome these exiles to their prairie homes until such time as permanent quarters could be found for them. Before the year was up nearly three thousand penniless refugees had found their way to the promised land, and temporarily distributed among the various Mennonite settlements throughout Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

In the years immediately following they came by the thousands, culminating in the peak year of 1926, when the number of arrivals reached the figure of 5940. But by this time the movement had nearly exhausted itself,

not, as already said, because the Canadian government, and the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company opposed the continuation of the stream of arrivals, nor because there was a lack of desire on the part of the Russian Mennonites to leave their native land, but rather because by this time the Soviet authorities had developed a decided distaste for the reflection which had been cast upon their communistic practises by the wholesale desire to emigrate on the part of their best farmers and most industrious citizens. By raising the price of passports to impossible levels after they had already dispossessed the well-to-do Mennonites of all their property, and by putting other hindrances in their way, the Russian governmental authorities made emigration practically impossible. In 1927, 847 Mennonites left Russia, and the next year only 511. Mennonite immigration to Canada had just about come to a close.

But soon after this, in 1929, a new group of Russian refugees, some 13,000, had gathered at Moscow seeking escape from the Red Terror. The plight of these Mennonites and their desire to come to Canada was first brought to the notice of the Canadian authorities through the Metropolitan press. But both the economic and political conditions in Canada had changed materially in the meantime. The western provinces especially, had been struck by an economic depression that had brought in its wake a great deal of unemployment, financial stringency and hard times in general; political control had been reversed, too, in most of the provinces, as well as in the Dominion government. In the general election of this year the Liberal party had lost to their Conservative rivals, who had never been sympathetic toward the generous immigration policies of the Liberals.

The newly elected Conservative prime minister of Saskatchewan, reading in the papers soon after his elec-

tion to office that some five thousand stranded Mennonite refugees in Moscow hoped to find their way to western Canada, immediately announced to the public that they would not be received in Saskatchewan.

The president of the Colonization Board made strenuous efforts, both in the provincial capitals and in Ottawa in behalf of the Moscow unfortunates but without success. The Dominion government would not have offered any serious objection to the admission of the immigrants, but hesitated to oppose the wishes of the western provinces. Manitoba finally agreed to accept two hundred families on condition that their friends and relatives guarantee their support if necessary. The Canadian Pacific also was willing to finance their transportation. But Saskatchewan and Alberta were determined in their opposition. And so, only about one thousand souls were admitted during the year. A few hundred more the following year practically ended the Mennonite immigration to Canada. By this time about 21,000 Mennonites had entered Canada, and had been distributed throughout the various parts of the Dominion.

Transportation Difficulties

That the transportation of these thousands of helpless immigrants from Russia to Canada, and their final settlement on permanent country homes of their own was beset with many hardships goes without saying. The Canadian quarantine regulations were strict. Hundreds of refugees were held up for periods of indefinite lengths at Riga, Southampton, Hamburg, Quebec and other detention camps, because of sore eyes, or other physical ailments; all at the expense of the Colonization Board. Even after their arrival in Canada the sick had to be cared for at considerable cost in local hospitals.

The rapid accumulation of the transportation debt

to the railroad company also became a cause of increasing anxiety, though it must be said to the credit of the Canadian Pacific that even as the debt piled up the company seemed willing at all times to enter into new contracts for bringing over more colonists, convinced that in the end Mennonite integrity and honesty would ultimately liquidate all their obligations.

The vast majority of these refugees took their obligations seriously, and in spite of hard times and lean years did all that could be expected of them toward the liquidation of their honest debts. But there were some, and more than there should have been, who too soon forgot the debt of gratitude they owed their Canadian brethren, the Canadian government, and the railroad company for delivering them from the Russian terror; and did little or nothing at all toward the repayment of their benefactors. In nearly all the meetings held by the immigrant groups in which they discussed their common problems, this transportation debt question had an important place on the program. C. K. Klassen, himself an immigrant, was finally appointed by the Colonization Board as the special representative to collect money from the immigrants to repay this obligation. By the end of 1939 over one million dollars had already been turned over to the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company, with a little less than half a million still to pay.

The opposition of many of the native churches also after they found that the contract made by the Colonization Board did not legally bind them to assume the financial burden of the enterprise, gradually melted away; and before the immigration movement had gotten well under way nearly all of these churches including all the branches of the denomination on both sides of the international boundary line, supported the work whole-

heartedly and generously with money, clothing, and supplies.

Settlement on the Land

What to do with these refugees permanently after their arrival here was an equally perplexing problem. The original agreement with the Dominion government was that the newcomers should settle on the land. Since nearly all of them had been farmers in Russia, this seemed a logical arrangement. Canada, still having plenty of available land for settlement, many possibilities presented themselves.

One of these possibilities seemingly was to be found in the large selection of well-improved farms of the Old Colonists and Sommerfelders of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, who, just at this time were finding their way to Mexico and Paraguay in large numbers. These farms were for sale at fairly reasonable prices, and on rather easy terms of payment. At the same time, too, a number of Gentleman farmers along the western frontiers, finding large scale farming decidedly unprofitable during the depression years, were willing to turn over their farms fully equipped with livestock and farm tools, to any group of industrious Mennonites who would agree to repay the owners over a course of years with an annual share of the crops raised. Here and there homestead lands were still available also, though rather far removed from the railroads and markets; and some railroad lands, too, along the fringes of civilization.

Unfortunately, most of these first fine promises ended in disappointment. Only a small part of the new immigrants were able to locate on the lands of the Old Colonists. The experiment of farming the large estates, too, as a community enterprise usually ended in failure. A few of the farmers continued as individual operators on

small portions of these estates, but community farming for which the Russians had neither experience nor inclination was entirely abandoned. Most of the land had been contracted for at too high a price, from thirty to forty dollars per acre. The prolonged period of crop failures and the low prices, caused many of the settlers in a few years to give up their contracts. Some succeeded in having their agreements modified; others left farming entirely and found their way for the time being into the various cities nearby in the hope of finding some other means of making a living. Ultimately most of them found their way on the land again on more favorable terms.

To protect the newcomers from the land speculators, who are always sure to prey on such occasions upon unsuspecting foreigners, a special board was organized, largely upon the suggestion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company, consisting of several members appointed by the company, and others representing the Mennonite group. This board was called the *Mennonite Land Settlement Board*, and worked in close cooperation with the Colonization Board. This organization supervised most of the settlements made by the immigrants; helping them, all told to nearly a million acres of land; practically all on long term credit, of course, to be paid from a share of the crops raised.

Most of the immigrants located in the western provinces, though a number also remained in Ontario near the settlements of the Old Mennonites. Many of these latter at first found work in the factories of Kitchener, Waterloo and surrounding towns. About one thousand in course of time located on small farms as tenants or purchasers on credit in the southwestern corner of Essex county where the native farmers, lacking farm labor because of their close proximity to Detroit, gladly welcomed these country minded Mennonite laborers and possible

purchasers. A small colony was also established on homesteads in the woodpulp regions of northern Ontario some miles beyond North Bay.

Although the newcomers tried as much as possible to locate in compact settlements, as had been their custom in Russia, that was not always possible here. Today these original twenty-one thousand immigrants and their children are distributed throughout 277 different settlements ranging all the way from half a dozen families to a settlement of the largest group of two hundred and sixty families near Coaldale in the southwestern corner of Alberta.

Many of the young women, too, about one thousand at one time, had little difficulty in finding work in domestic service in the western cities, thus greatly helping out the family budget, and making possible the liquidation of the transportation debt.

Cultural Life

Being a devoutly religious people, these Russian Mennonites were deeply concerned that their children should be brought up in their traditional beliefs and practises, both in the home and school. That is one reason why they wished to settle in compact communities, large enough to form effective and vital school and church units. In every settlement, wherever possible, the first institution to be established after the home was the church, then the school. For the Mennonites in Russia had always been firmly convinced that the school was a vital agency in the cultivation of their religious principles. Religion was not a mere theory among them, but a very vital part of the whole of life. God was very near to them; and worship an essential experience. One of the immigrant trains on its way west stopped for ten minutes at a small way station in Ontario one Sunday morning in 1923 for a change of engines; the leader of the immigrant

group asked permission to conduct a brief worship service on the station platform during the interval. A short Scripture reading, a brief prayer, several familiar German hymns by the large concourse of devout worshippers, and the train moved on westward. But the brief scene was not without its effect on the small crowd of native Canadians who had come down to the station to witness this unusual spectacle. "If that is the kind of immigrants they are bringing over here," said one of the bystanders, the local Presbyterian pastor, "we have nothing to fear. We need more like them."

Since the new arrivals included an unusually large number of both preachers and teachers, churches and schools were rapidly organized. Up to 1939 seventy-six new church buildings had been erected, ranging in cost from several hundred dollars to the large building in Coaldale, constructed at a cost of eleven thousand dollars, and with a seating capacity of twelve hundred. Since this settlement included about fifteen hundred Mennonites, the church house no doubt is usually filled to capacity.

Both branches of the Russian Mennonite church were represented among the immigrants. Perhaps about three-fifths were of the division which in Russia was called the *Altkirchliche Mennoniten*, and which in Canada united with the group spoken of as the General Conference; the other two-fifths were members of the *Mennonite Brethren*, both here and there.

Schools, too, elementary and advanced, were given early attention, both public and private. Bible schools especially seemed popular, seventeen of which have been founded up to the present time in various communities; partly the result, no doubt, of the desire to give young people the religious training which the public schools dare not offer; but partly due, too, likely to a surplus of preachers and teachers who plied this trade in Russia and found

it difficult to discover any other means of a livelihood, here. Both of the Mennonite schools at Gretna and Rosthern were greatly revived, if not altogether saved, by a large influx of immigrant students. Among the newcomers were a number of University graduates, some writers with more or less of literary talent, and a few artists. Some of these have since found their way into the college and university faculties of both Canada and the United States. Soon after the arrival of the first contingent of immigrants, Dr. D. Neufeld founded a weekly paper at Rosthern, called the *Der Mennonitische Immigranten Bote* which devoted its pages to the interests of the new arrivals, with widely scattered news from both the old home and the new. In 1935, also, Arnold Dyck began the publication of an illustrated Mennonite magazine at Winnipeg called the *Mennonitische Warte*; but due to lack of proper support the project had to be discontinued.

Hospitals and Homes

In Russia, it was seen, the Mennonite settlements formed not only independent religious bodies, but independent economic and social units as well. The Mennonites took care of their own sick, their own poor, and their own dependents and delinquents. They desired as far as possible to do the same here. Up to date they have erected in Canada five hospitals in the larger settlements. For the purpose of furnishing a wholesome social atmosphere for the thousand or more of girls who were engaged in domestic service in the larger cities, a number of girls homes or social centers were established in Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, Saskatoon and several other cities. These homes, no doubt, have not only greatly added to the social life of the girls but have also been vital factors in the preservation of their religious faith during

these trying transitional stages. Several itinerant ministers also have been supported in their visits to the various scattered settlements.

The German Language

Linguistically and culturally, of course, the Russian Mennonites were German, in spite of the fact that they had lived in Russia for nearly one hundred and fifty years; and German is still the language of worship and social intercourse among them. Because of this common language, and because of the sympathetic interest shown by the pre-Nazi government in their flight from Russia, they still retain a warm feeling for the Germans, even Nazi Germany, many of them. Living as they do in compact areas, they will be able to perpetuate their German culture for some years to come, and perhaps retard somewhat the rapid trend that had set in toward the use of English among the earlier Russian immigrants of the seventies of the past century. Unlike the Old Colonists, however, who had left Canada for Mexico and Paraguay because they did not wish to send their children to English schools, these late immigrants on the contrary are anxious, and perfectly willing to learn the language of their adopted country; and seem to have no scruples against sending their children to the public schools, though they are still committed to the necessity of adding religion as a subject of instruction somewhere in the system.

Non-resistance

In their attitude toward war service, the late immigrants are inclined to assume a somewhat more liberal policy than did their brethren of the earlier period in the seventies. The latter, it will be remembered, left Russia because they could take no part whatsoever in war, or war preparation, not even in such non-combatant services as Red Cross in times of war, or forestry work in times

of peace. The former, the descendants of such as remained in Russia at that time, satisfied with the substitute service offered by the Russian government, have remained more liberal than the former toward all forms of so-called non-combatant war activities. During the recent world war, the Mennonites of Russia did valuable service as complete Red Cross units under their own control, though under government supervision, and in the war department. The descendants of the immigrants to Canada, on the other hand, were granted complete military exemption during the world war by the Canadian government. If conscription should again be resorted to in this present war by Canada, this division between the two groups of Mennonites, one taking the absolutist stand, the other willing to accept non-combatant service, might result in some confusion to the government in the formulation of its exemption policies, and prove a matter of embarrassment to the older absolutist groups.

Helping Hands

The migration of some twenty odd thousand Mennonite refugees from the terrors of Russia, where every possible obstacle was set against their escape, to the Canadian prairies where at first, too, an Order in Council still barred their entrance, is an epic in Mennonite annals almost unsurpassed anywhere in all history. The successful accomplishment of this task under these trying conditions required the most skillful leadership, the closest cooperation of hundreds of kind-hearted Mennonites on both sides of the international boundary line; the most sympathetic support of liberal-minded Canadian public officials; and the generous assistance of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company, without whose timely help the project would have been impossible.

Lack of space here permits the mention of only a few

of the outstanding men of the large number who gave unstintingly of their time and talents in the prosecution of this long and tedious rescue work. Among these should be mentioned H. H. Ewert of Gretna, educational leader of the Canadian Mennonites, and one of the first to urge that the task of rescuing their Russian brethren be undertaken, but who unfortunately died before the work had been finished; Reverend H. A. Neufeld of Herbert, Saskatchewan, an original member of the committee sent to Ottawa in the interests of the repeal of the Orders in Council barring the entrance of Mennonites; P. H. Wiebe of Steinbach, Manitoba, a member of the Holde-man branch of the church; and three members of the Old Mennonite branch, S. F. Coffman of Vineland, Ontario, E. S. Hallman, and A. S. Bowman, both of Guernsey, Saskatchewan.¹

But special credit must be given to Reverend David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, who remained the chief promoter of the movement throughout the entire period. He was the guiding spirit in every phase of the work. He was president of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, later also president of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board; and in course of time an official member of nearly every organization that had anything to do with the welfare of the Russian immigrants. For fully twenty years David Toews spent the best part of his life, and gave generously of his time and energies without remuneration above his bare expenses in behalf of the welfare of his Russian brethren. A quiet, patient, determined, deeply religious man, himself a victim in his childhood of the ill-fated Asiatic Chiva expedition in the eighties of the past century, and soon

1 A large number of faithful church leaders this side of the international boundary line, too, were active in the various relief drives in behalf of their Russian brethren.

after an immigrant to Kansas, he was well qualified by both experience as well as temperament to head up what at first seemed a lost cause, and to most men would have seemed an impossible task. His heart went out to his suffering Mennonite brethren; and he left nothing stand in the way of bringing them effective help. When the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company demanded as a condition to the bringing over of the first group of Mennonites the signing of an impossible contract, Toews signed it; when the Mennonite churches in western Canada and some of the Mennonite periodicals openly discouraged the whole immigration movement, he almost single-handed carried on the enterprise, patiently hoping that those opposing would soon change their minds—and they did. When the Canadian Pacific again later complained that the immigrants that had been brought over were in arrears in their payments of their passage money, he entreated the delinquents at every opportunity to do their best to meet these obligations, but at the same time entered into further agreements with the Company to bring over still larger contingents and assume larger obligations. He travelled extensively in both Canada and the United States collecting money and clothing for the sick and the needy; and repeatedly visited Ottawa as well as the provincial capitals as new needs demanded. And all this for twenty years without other remuneration than the satisfaction of knowing that a great humanitarian task had been well done. In years to come the children's children of these refugees will have repeated occasions for remembering with the deepest gratitude the name of David Toews.

MEXICO

It seems rather strange that while Canada seemed a promised land to the Russian Mennonites seeking escape

from the Red Terror, to another group of native Canadian Mennonites it was regarded as a land of oppression, all because they regarded the German language as an integral part of their religious faith. The one could not exist without the other, they thought. And so when the Canadian government insisted that all the Mennonite children attend the English public schools where German was not to be taught, a certain portion of the more conservative elements decided upon another trek from liberal Canada where German was proscribed, to illiberal Mexico where German was tolerated.

Old Colonists

The delegation of Old Colonists from Manitoba which visited Mexico in 1921, in the interests of a mass migration arrived in Mexico at a rather opportune time. The request for such special privileges as exemption from military service, complete religious toleration, control of their own schools conducted in a foreign language, and land available for large and compact closed settlements could be obtained only from a country that was unusually anxious to secure industrious farmers, and at the same time had sufficient uncultivated soil on which to locate them. The Mexican government at this particular time was in a position to meet all these demands.

While no special laws were passed to meet these demands of the prospective colonists, the delegation was assured by President Obregon that all their requests were fully covered in the Constitution of 1917, and the prevailing laws of the country. The Mennonites, he said, need have no fear whatever that they would be restricted in their religious freedom. This assurance of President Obregon's might have been received with a little less of faith by a delegation a bit better versed in Mexican history than were the Old Colonists: for at this very time

the government of Mexico was engaged in a bitter struggle against the Catholic church, and had closed all the church doors, forbidden the priests to perform their clerical functions, and had banned all foreign clergy. It was understood, of course, that this crusade was against the state church, and would not seriously affect the non-Catholic free churches. But it was not a hopeful sign for the future at the best.

Military service also, the delegation was told, was on a voluntary basis; and the laws respecting local government and schools, with the exception of the Catholic schools, were quite liberal. Neither was there any restriction against the use of any foreign language either in the church or schools. Court procedure did not demand an oath. Mere affirmation was sufficient. In other words, the Constitution and the liberal laws of Mexico, the delegates were told, already provided all the guarantees they desired without the necessity of special legislation.

Land, too, could be had, either government land or private estates, at reasonable prices and in unlimited quantities. Most of the land in Mexico at this time was still held by speculators both native and foreign, in the form of large estates. The actual farmers, peons so called, mostly Indians and half-breeds, lived in a state of serfdom, huddled together in small villages, in crude one-room adobe huts, completely at the mercy of the absentee land lord, with little hope of bettering their condition. Much of the soil was still uncultivated.

The new land policy of the government called for the liquidation of all these large estates and their redistribution among the actual tillers of the soil. For this reason the government was anxious to settle the hitherto waste areas with industrious farmers like the Mennonites who

might serve in a way as model farmers to the less thrifty and efficient native peons. Many of these estates had already fallen into the hands of the government; and the remaining private owners of large haciendas were eager to unload.

Two large Mennonite colonies were established in Mexico, one, the largest one, about fifty miles west of the city of Chihuahua in the state of the same name; the other, near the city of Durango, in the state of Durango. From 1922, when the first Canadians arrived, until 1926, about five thousand Old Colonists, and nearly another thousand of Sommerfelders from Manitoba and Saskatchewan had located in these two colonies. During this time some forty long train loads of passengers, with live stock, farm equipment, and household utensils crossed the Rio Grande from the north, into the land of the cactus and the eagle where they purchased a number of large estates, counting up well toward a half million acres of land at a price of nearly four million dollars, mostly in cash, though the colonists had some difficulty in disposing of their Canadian farms for ready cash during the depression years.

Both of these groups brought with them and transplanted on Mexican soil all their traditional conservative social and economic institutions and religious practises. They reproduced as nearly as possible the kind of life they had left in Canada. They formed themselves into some forty village groups of from twenty to forty families each as their forefathers had done on the steppes of south Russia and on the prairies of Manitoba. Even the village names were reproduced — *Rosenort*, *Steinbach*, *Schoenwiese*, etc., although the names once descriptive of the beautiful meadows or flower gardens of south Russia did not quite fit the sandy cactus fields of central Mexico. In both colonies the land consisted of a high plateau, more

than a mile above sea level, almost within the tropics, semi-arid, only a small fraction of which was under cultivation, the remainder being grazing land or still the haunt of the rattlesnake and desert vegetation.

The beginning of course was hard. But it is marvelous what Mennonite industry and thrift and modern farming methods can do in a few years. In a remarkably short time what had once been an uninhabited and desolate stretch of sand and cactus had been transformed into a series of some forty prosperous villages, surrounded by fields of wheat and corn, and green pastures dotted with fine herds of Canadian livestock. The natives marvelled at the superior products from the Mennonite farms and herds; and soon learned to discriminate between native and Mennonite stock in the market places. A scrawny Arkansas razor-back could easily be recognized as a native; but the sleek, well-fed porkers that found their way to the markets in Durango and Chihuahua were soon designated as "Mennonite" hogs; and the healthy-looking cows as "Mennonite" cows. The government officials, too, in their tours of inspection expressed themselves well-pleased with what the Mennonites had accomplished in so short a time, although they were somewhat disappointed at what they called the exclusiveness of the Old Colonists, who, living in large compact settlements, and refusing to mingle socially or economically with the natives, did not have the influence as model farmers which the governmental officials had hoped for. The native Mexican villages near the Mennonite settlement all greatly benefitted, however, from the prosperity of the Mennonites. The little village of Cuauhtemoc, just at the edge of the Mennonite colony in Chihuahua, which had consisted of only a few poor families in 1921 had grown by 1935 into a prosperous up-to-date city of nearly four thousand.

The Russian Contingent

Meanwhile, there seemed to be a fair possibility about this time of securing the influx of a large body of Mennonites from Russia. Although the Russian delegation of 1920 had passed Mexico by as a possible home for prospective Mennonite refugees, yet a certain amount of interest remained for the Republic to the south among the Mennonites of Russia as well as certain Mennonite groups in the United States. The telegram of B. B. Janz to Newton, Kansas, requesting that arrangements be made with the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company for the transportation of ten thousand Russians to Mexico has already been mentioned. In the meantime, in 1921, another Mennonite Colonization Society had been formed among a number of men in the vicinity of Newton, whose chief objective was to further the Mexican project.

The Mexican government, too, especially the officials in the land and railway departments, were greatly interested in the proposed migration, and the officials of the Kansas colonization society were given liberal passes over the railroad company lines for inspecting suitable sites for settlement. At a meeting held in Newton, in 1924, of officials of the Mexican government, the colonization society, and certain New York financiers, a rather elaborate scheme was worked out for financing a mass immigration movement. According to this proposed scheme the New York financiers were to finance the enterprise by issuing six percent bonds, endorsed by reliable American Mennonite individuals, and then countersigned by the prospective Russian immigrant. The Mexican government was to furnish transportation from the Mexican sea coast at Vera Cruz to the homes selected in the interior. This ambitious plan was never carried out; for a number of reasons, but chiefly no doubt because of the

difficulty of finding the Mennonite endorsers. Between 1924 and 1926 several hundred stragglers arrived in small groups at Vera Cruz, usually penniless, and sometimes unheralded, and found their way into the interior where they formed several settlements on available haciendas which they purchased on long term contracts.

The largest of these settlements was located near the city of Irapuato in the state of Guanajuto. All these small Mennonite colonies from Russia had to be supported by the Newton colonization society during their stay in Mexico. Unable to meet their payments, and dissatisfied with their prospects here, most of them finally found their way to Canada. A few remained, however. These latter drifted for the most part into the city of Cauahtemoc, on the outskirts of the Old Colony settlement, where in 1938 H. P. Krehbiel of Newton, organized them into a small congregation, now affiliated with the General Conference of North America. Among the leaders in this small group is David Radekop, who through his industry and keen business ability is building up a successful business enterprise in this rapidly growing city, being interested among other things in a city water plant, and several small dairies.

Old Colonists Not a Burden to Relief Societies

Neither the Kansas society nor any of the other American Mennonite relief agencies took much interest in the affairs of the Old Colonist enterprise in Mexico. These were able to finance themselves and needed no outside help. Religiously, too, they were well organized, and too conservative in their beliefs and practises to accept any spiritual ministration outside their own group. Although they suffered considerable economic hardship during the early years, their church and school privileges

were fairly well respected during these years of political disturbance.

Anxious Days

But during the early thirties the new socialist government, forgetting the promises of Obregon to the delegation of 1921, began to apply their socialization program to the Mennonite schools as well as to those of the natives; and demanded that native Mexican teachers replace those of the Mennonite faith. For some months the Mennonite schools were closed. It was just for this that the colonists had left Canada,—loss of control over their own schools. Once more there was talk of another trek, even back to Canada if no other place opened up. Several hundred did return between 1936 and 1938.

At the same time Mexican bandits, taking advantage of the pacificism of the Mennonites, frequently broke into their homes, and even attacked them in their homes or on their way to the markets. Several Mennonites had already been killed in these encounters. When the Mexican government learned that the Mennonites were seriously considering leaving the country, they decided to intervene in their behalf. After all, the government did not wish to see the flourishing villages and well cultivated fields of some ten thousand Mennonites revert back to the barren deserts they once had been. And so, in 1936, president Cardenas promised the Mennonites again all their school privileges and added police protection against banditry. The schools were again opened; robbery and banditry ceased for a time; the plans for a wholesale exodus was given up.

How long this security will last, of course no one can tell. For the time the Mennonites may enjoy a certain degree of peace and prosperity. But no doubt many an Old Colonist, way down in his heart, often regrets the

day he made the foolish decision to exchange his peaceful and prosperous home on the prairies of Manitoba for the political instabilities and the religious uncertainties of his new dwelling place in the deserts of central Mexico.

PARAGUAY

The Menno Colony

Not all of the conservative Canadian Mennonites who proposed to emigrate, favored Mexico as a future home. Some of the Sommerfelders as well as the members of the Bergthal and Chortitz groups, considering the political and social conditions in Mexico too uncertain to justify removal to that country, preferred to risk South America as the goal of their colonization project. A delegation of six, consequently, representing these three groups left Canada in February, 1921, on a tour of inspection through Paraguay, where in the Gran Chaco region they had been told there was plenty of good land to be had in any quantity desired; and where the Paraguayan government was ready to grant all their requests for religious and political freedom, including control of their own schools in their own language.

After an extended visit into the heart of the Chaco, several hundred miles west of Puerto Casado, a landing place on the Paraguay river, well within the tropics, which happened to fall within the best season of the year, southern autumn, when the light rains and the cool nights made life in the tropics comfortable, the deputies returned home some months later with a favorable report on the promised land; and a charter of privileges passed for their benefit by the Paraguayan Congress, granting them all they asked for:—religious toleration, military exemption, control of their schools, local political rule,

entrance into Paraguay of farm implements and household utensils free of charge for a limited time, and entrance of immigrants without medical examination.

This report was alluring to the prospective emigrants. Many were impatient to start immediately, and might have done so but for one hurdle in the way. It was not an easy matter to find a ready sale for several hundred farms all at once except at a great sacrifice. Even before the return of the deputies, the leaders of the movement had contacted a New York financier by the name of Samuel McRoberts who had agreed to an exchange of Canadian farms for raw land in the Chaco. McRoberts, in turn, had been in consultation with the Paraguayan minister at Washington, Dr. Eusebia Ayola, regarding the Paraguayan angle of the deal. But before this arrangement could be carried out the great depression of 1922 and the years following swept across the country, carrying farm prices down to such unprecedented levels that the New York promoter withdrew his offer. It was not renewed until 1925.

Financing the Project

To carry out the project now, McRoberts and his associates formed two stock companies—the *Intercontinental Company* (I.C.) with headquarters at Winnipeg; and the *Corporation Paraguay* (C. P.) with headquarters at Asuncion. The I. C. agreed to buy all the land of the Canadians, some forty-four thousand acres, for the sum of nine hundred thousand dollars, pay the owner seven dollars per acre in cash, and exchange the rest through the C. P. for one hundred and thirty-eight thousand acres in the Paraguayan Chaco, at the rate of about five dollars per acre—land for which the Corporation had paid one dollar and twenty-five cents a short time before to the

Casado heirs, who had vast holdings in this area since 1885.

The first transport of three hundred and nine emigrants left Altona, Manitoba, November 23, 1926; and a month later at Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, were welcomed to their new home by the Paraguayan president, the same Dr. Ayola who several years before, as minister to Washington, had taken such an interest in the proposed migration. Great was the disappointment, however, of the Canadian exiles as a few days later, they were unloaded at Puerta Casado, some distance up the Paraguay river, from which port they were to find their way to the Chaco.

Early Disappointments

No preparation had been made for their reception by the C. P. except the erection of several crude wooden sheds for their temporary stay; and even these were still in the making. The land they were to occupy as homes had not yet been located, nor even surveyed. They had left their Canadian homes in the beginning of winter, to arrive below the equator in the Torrid zone, in the hottest season of the year, southern midsummer. There were few signs of human habitation for miles. Even Puerto Casado, the river port was hardly more than a loading wharf for the products of the Quebracho acid industry located here by the Casado interests. To the west, in the direction of their future homes in the Chaco, there wasn't a single white inhabitant for hundreds of miles; only a few bands of roving Indians without permanent homes, as raw and uncivilized as were the North American Indians at the time Columbus discovered the continent; innumerable foxes, a few jaguars, poisonous snakes, a plenteous supply of parrots, myriads of grasshoppers, mosquitoes and other

pestiferous insects, gigantic ant hills, ten feet in diameter and three and four feet high, and an occasional troupe of monkeys.

Even the heavens above seemed strange. Instead of the big dipper high in the northern sky, there was the southern cross never seen in their northern homes. The sun overhead was to the north instead of to the south as they had been used to seeing it. This was a strange new world into which these exiles had wandered in search of religious freedom.

For more than a year there seemed little concern on the part of the C. P. to survey the land. In the meantime, other transports kept disembarking throughout the year at Puerto Casado, until over seventeen hundred disillusioned colonists had been crowded into the barracks and improvised shelters near by. Many of these now, becoming increasingly impatient with the crowded conditions at the port of entry, and anxious to make their way toward their permanent homes, following the little narrow guage railroad and the ox cart trail toward the Chaco, located in small groups here and there along the way in temporary shelters, awaiting the allotment of their permanent homes farther on.

It is not strange that under these crowded conditions, and lack of ordinary sanitary arrangements and proper food, and under radical climatic changes, and no medical advice, disease epidemics should claim their toll of human life. Like all pioneer American colonial ventures, this one, too, had its dying time. First, the children took sick and died; then adults, until by the end of the first year one hundred and forty-seven of the colonists had succumbed to their hardships. Before the land was surveyed, and the first village established two hundred lonely graves marked the ox cart trail from the river harbor to the later settlements in the Chaco.

First Settlements Made

It was not until the spring of 1928 that the survey of the colony was finally completed, and the first village, *Bergthal*, was permanently located. Of course many of these disillusioned home-seekers lost their courage through this long period of delay. Some were homesick and longed for the pleasant fields and familiar sights of Manitoba. Several families during the period found their way to the capital city, Asuncion; others started a new settlement farther down the river near Villa Rica; about three hundred and fifty souls had the courage to return to Canada. But these latter, too, met with added disappointment on their return. Their former Canadian homes were now occupied by strangers; their Chaco farms, not yet surveyed, were unsalable, and consequently for them valueless. Their ready cash had been used up in the heavy transportation expenses to and from South America. Many had left Manitoba and Saskatchewan several years before fairly prosperous, only to return empty handed, thoroughly convinced, no doubt, that they had paid a rather high price for the unsuccessful attempt to save their German heritage.

The Chaco a Vast Plain

The Gran Chaco is a vast stretch of virgin land lying between the Pilcamayo and the Paraguay rivers in the heart of the tropics on the Bolivian-Paraguayan frontier, uncharted, and until recently, uninhabited by any white man. It is for the most part without adequate drainage; wet and cool in winter, but hot and dry in summer; and consequently with a soil that is inclined to be salty. It is covered with a dense growth of underbrush, with occasional clusters of big tropical hardwoods, and interspersed here and there with open spaces of a tall bitter

native grass that is good for thatching roofs, but not for feeding live stock.

In the heart of this wilderness, about one hundred and forty miles straight west from Puerto Casado, and about fifty by ox-cart trail from the nearest terminus of the little narrow gauge railway that connects it with the river port, the Corporation Paraguay located the Mennonite tract of about one hundred eighty square miles, which the settlers called *Menno*. The original village, *Bergthal*, just mentioned, was now soon followed by seventeen others, distributed throughout the open grass spaces of the land area. Following the early Russian and Canadian Mennonite traditions, and perhaps also necessity in part, the settlers grouped themselves into villages of from fifteen to twenty families each. The average farm was from eighty to two hundred acres in size, thirty acres of which consisted of a household plot within the village itself; the remainder being allotted as conveniently as possible from the outlining open grass or woodland. Home ties were kept alive by christening these new villages after their well-known Canadian predecessors—*Reinland*, *Chortitz*, *Schoenthal*, *Steinbach*, etc. *Laubenheim* evidently was native.

Fernheim

The *Fernheim* colony, which consists of some forty thousand acres bordering the northwestern boundaries of the Menno tract, was settled by such of the Moscow refugees, as were unable for one reason or another to gain admission to Canada, and did not volunteer for Brazil. The American Mennonite Central Committee, it will be remembered, took special interest in the plight of these Moscow refugees from the start. The committee preferred Paraguay to Brazil as a possible home for several reasons—a successful Canadian Mennonite colony



A Mennonite Refugee Madonna, enroute from Harbin, China to the Gran Chaco 1930.

had already been established here, and further because of the liberal terms, and especially military exemption, which the Paraguayan government had guaranteed prospective Mennonite immigrants. Dr. Harold S. Bender, representing the M. C. C., at the time in Germany, at first assumed responsibility for the transportation of one hundred families from Germany to Paraguay; but later this number was largely increased. Suitable land was bought from the same Corporation Paraguay which had financed the Canadian venture, at eight dollars per acre on the installment plan. G. G. Hiebert of California, who had had some experience in relief work among the Siberian Mennonites several years before, was sent to South America to represent the M. C. C. in the actual work of settlement. Over one hundred thousand dollars was finally collected among the American Mennonites to sponsor this project.

The first contingent of this Moscow group left their temporary barracks in Germany on March 15, 1930, were welcomed at Asuncion as had been their Canadian brethren before them, a month later by another Paraguayan president, and finally reached the terminus of the Puerto Casado railway, where they were met by their Canadian brethren from Menno, to be transported in big two-wheeled ox-cart to the Corporation camp which had been prepared for them on the outskirts of their proposed colony. Here they soon established themselves into villages of from fifteen to twenty families each, much after the fashion of their earlier Menno brethren. Other groups during the year brought the total number of arrivals up to fifteen hundred. In 1932, three hundred seventy-eight of the Harbin exiles joined the colony. These, together with a small company of Mennonites from Poland who had also found their way here, brought the whole number of immigrants to this settlement to about two thou-

sand. Perhaps, because they were homesick, the first settlers called their colony *Fernheim*; and their individual villages, too, eighteen of them, repeated familiar names from the homeland—*Lichtfelde*, *Orloff*, *Rosenort*, etc. *Hiebertsheim* commemorated one of their American benefactors, and *Auhagen*, their German friend in Moscow.

Hardships

Both of these colonies, *Menno* and *Fernheim*, the former less than the latter, experienced hardships almost unbearable from the start. Hundreds of miles from markets and sources of supplies, with no transportation facilities other than the ox cart, with no money, tools, heavily in debt for all their land, no improvements of any kind, the *Fernheim* colony especially had to start from scratch, practically empty-handed. Their first homes, tools, farms and farm equipment and all the essential elements of their economic life they had to create from nothing. Their first makeshift houses were without floors or ceiling, with thatched roofs made of the native bitter grass, or perhaps of discarded galvanized sheet iron; windows without glass admitted an invasion of flies, mosquitoes, and all the pestiferous insects that infest a hot, swampy, and salty wilderness; the furniture was all homemade from the hardwoods near by. Almost the first concern of the settlers was the search for fresh water. Numerous wells were dug, but most of them contained only salt and bitter water. The finding of a fresh, or "sweet" water well was the source of great rejoicing. Some of the villages were forced to carry the water for both their stock and themselves for miles from the supply of more fortunate neighboring villages.

The intense summer heat, too, with occasional dust storms from the Argentinian north, and periodical

drouths just when the growing crops needed moisture most often, bore heavily on the physical stamina of the colonists.

Familiar crops like wheat and certain highly prized garden vegetables refused to grow in the tropical Chaco. The lack of white bread remained a major complaint for some years among the more particular. Kaffir corn bread, they said, made good chicken feed, but was not particularly palatable for humans, especially those from the Canadian and Russian wheat fields. It was some years before it was found that such crops as Kaffir corn, peanuts, beans, cotton, and even watermelons could be grown with some success and fair profit. Too often even when growing crops gave promise of a good harvest, either a prolonged drouth, or a sudden swarm of grasshoppers in a few days would blast all the cherished hopes of better times ahead.

It was to be expected, of course, that under these conditions, all of which tended to undermine the physical stamina of the early settlers, and in the absence of doctors and medical supplies, disease should make its inroad among them. Like their neighbors at Menno, the Fernheimers also had their period of mourning. Eighty-eight new graves, scattered throughout the village cemeteries, gave mute evidence of the disease ravages during the first year.

Naturally, these disappointments and hardships caused a good deal of homesickness among the faint-hearted, and developed a desire among them to seek a better location if possible. Unlike the Canadian brethren, of course, the Fernheimers could not return home, for they had no home land to go to, but they might seek a more suitable place in Paraguay; and some of them did. For a time it seemed that the entire Fernheim colony might leave. But up to the present, 1939, only about one-

third of the colony has left for other locations, some for the larger cities, but most of them for a new settlement in eastern Paraguay, near Rosario, in a new colony which they call *Friesland*, after the native land of the founder of their faith, Menno Simons.

Gradually the situation improved somewhat, and living conditions became more tolerable. Year by year a little more land was cleared; living quarters became a little more comfortable; kiln-dried brick in a few places replaced the original adobe huts; fresh water wells were discovered in increasing numbers; cotton, it was discovered, could be cultivated with considerable success; and it has become the chief cash crop, though the government's policy of money inflation, and the distance to market made the net profits still disappointingly small. Labor saving machinery, too, though crude and home-made, lightened somewhat the burdens of the farmer. A crude threshing machine run by a gasoline engine replaced the old hand flail; a cotton gin, an oil press, a kaffir corn flour mill, and other machinery was gradually introduced. Horses and mules gradually replaced the slow moving and stubborn oxen as the chief beasts of burden. The breeding of cattle and hogs, and raising of chickens has increased both the quality and quantity of food, and health conditions have improved as a result.

The destructive forces of nature, however, unfortunately have not shown a similar trend. The ravenous grasshoppers, the ubiquitous ants and flees, the tropical sun, droughts and dust storms have continued their devastating visits unabated.

In fact, it is extremely doubtful whether any other people than these pious and industrious Mennonites, overjoyed at their escape from a living death in Red Russia, and no other prospect for a future home than the Chaco wilderness, would have been able or willing to endure

these hardships. They were willing to face any trial and undergo any distress if only their religious faith and the spiritual welfare of their children could be spared. So great was their gratitude for having escaped this danger in Russia that they set apart November 25, the day they left Moscow, as a special annual day of thanksgiving for their deliverance. Even with all these handicaps, however, they made a remarkable showing during these few years in their conquest of the primitive wilderness, though the enterprise is still in the experimental stage.

Indians

The small bands of Indians that roved about the underbrush of the Chaco were not a threat to the Mennonite colonists. They were peaceful and harmless; and in the early days, before they knew the value of money, they were of great help in clearing the underbrush from the first farms, being used by both the colonies for that purpose. Later on, as they became more money-minded, they were less inclined to accept this kind of work at a price the settlers could afford to pay.

The Chaco War

The Bolivian-Paraguayan war, too, was fought during this period, sometimes not far from the Mennonite settlements. The roar of cannon was often heard in the villages, and soldiers frequently passed through the streets. With the exception of a few tragedies, the colonists were not seriously molested. One of the Menno settlers was shot while attempting to protect his daughter against an attack by a Paraguayan soldier; a Bolivian aviator, flying low over Philadelphia, one time, emptied his machine gun into the town hall, but did no serious damage. On the contrary, the army camps nearby often furnished a welcome market for eggs and other supplies

produced by the colonists, who were eager to exchange these articles for a little ready cash. In the main, pleasant relations were maintained between the army and both colonies. Occasionally a wounded soldier would be brought into the local hospital. Fernheim was presented with a captured Bolivian gasoline truck by the commanding officer of the Paraguayan army for hospital service. The Mennonites, on the other hand, one Christmas day, presented the soldiers with a liberal supply of cookies, pastries and other German Christmas delicacies.

Help from the M. C. C.

The American Mennonite Central Committee, it will be remembered, took a special interest in the Fernheim colony, though they had little part in the promotion of the Menno settlement or of the Brazilian venture. All these settlements, however, were visited by different members of the committee at various times in the interest of their general welfare.

The financial arrangements between Fernheim and the Corporation Paraguay during most of this time were especially unsatisfactory. In the early years much of the local equipment needed by the settlers, and supplies were bought through the Corporation at rather exorbitant prices. The price paid for the land also was too high, and payments could not be met. For a time foreclosure threatened the colony. Finally, in 1938, the M. C. C. bought out the interests of the Corporation at a greatly reduced price; and made new contracts with the farmers at a figure which they could meet; and thus the financial future of the colony was assured again for a time.

Although the American Mennonites were not responsible for any of the other settlements, yet they were concerned for the spiritual welfare of all their South American brethren; and in 1939 the General Conference

sent their field secretary, H. A. Fast, on a good will visit to all of the South American colonies.

Local Government

The charter granted the Mennonites by the Paraguayan government, as seen elsewhere, permitted a wide degree of freedom in the selection of such forms of local government, and such an educational program as suited their needs, and satisfied their religious convictions. After several unsatisfactory experiments, the Fernheim group adopted a form of local control that was based somewhat upon that known to their early Russian forefathers. At the head of the colony is a superintendent called *Oberschultz*, elected by a general assembly of all the villages, aided by several assistants and a clerk. This superintendent is granted considerable arbitrary power. Each village, too, has a local magistrate called a *Schultz*, together with a village clerk, and peace officer.

There is also an independent court system, consisting of a central peace office located at the headquarters of the colony, and local justices of peace in each village. Village peace officials are selected by the *Oberschultz* from a list prepared by the local village town meeting. This type of government, it will be observed, is a sort of compromise between a pure democracy and a rather arbitrary rule of a highly centralized superintendent. In fact this arbitrary assumption of power by the central authorities was one of the contributing factors to the heavy emigration of the Fernheimers to Friesland several years ago. This independent and privileged position of the Mennonites within the framework of the Paraguayan government accords them almost the status of a state within a state; and so long as they remain isolated in the Chaco wilderness, several hundred miles from the nearest civilized frontier outpost, they likely will not be molested

by the Paraguayan authorities in the control of their local domestic affairs.

The conservative Canadians in Menno, more suspicious of worldly government, and less open to the introduction of new experiments, adopted a simpler form of local rule, which was also less independent of religious authority. Before they left Canada they had selected a committee, *Fuersorge Komitee*, representing the three different groups making up the colony, to direct all the business affairs of the whole company. This committee has never been discharged, and still directs all of their material affairs, serving without pay, as do their preachers and other public servants. All questions of general interest are decided in a general meeting of the whole colony. Necessary discipline is administered by the elders and ministers. The Menno group does not recognize a special non-religious system. They make very little distinction between worldly and spiritual rule.

Both colonies, continuing the practises of their Canadian and Russian ancestors, supply their own fire and livestock insurance companies, children's homes and hospitals. The primitive conditions of their settlements, and their common needs demanded for a time a number of cooperative business enterprises. Fernheim early established a cooperative store, cooperative mills and other necessary undertakings. The cooperative spirit pervading the whole life of the colony is well expressed in a large wall motto hanging above the front stage of the town hall—*Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz*,—(Public Welfare above Self-interest.)

In the Fernheim colony all these enterprises, together with the local government offices, the high school, industrial plants, mills, cotton gins, and the printing press, were centrally located in a town especially built to be the headquarters for the entire settlement. This town, built

on a tract of land consisting of two hundred and fifty acres specially donated for that purpose by the Corporation Paraguay, was at first called Hindenberg by the founders; but later, very much to the disgust of the historian of the colony, Dr. Walter Quiring, who is a great admirer of all things German, including Adolf Hitler, the name was changed to *Philadelphia*, city of brotherly love. Less pretentious are the headquarters of the Menno group at Steinbach.

Schools

To both settlements, control of their schools continued to be a major interest. To the Fernheim colony, especially, the re-education of their children was a matter of grave concern, since they had already been subjected in Russia to ten years of the blighting influences of the atheistic ideals of communist teachers.

Fortunately, there were a number of efficient teachers among the Russian immigrants. The first crude building to be erected in every village after living quarters had been provided for was the primitive little school hut, without furniture or school equipment, and for a time without school books. The curriculum, however, was up to date and varied, stressing especially German, with some history, nature study, mathematics, as well as singing and religion. The native tongue was not neglected. The second year a number of teachers spent some time, at government expense, at Asuncion to learn the language of the land. After 1935 a high school, called a "Central" school, was erected at Philadelphia. Fritz Kliever was sent to Germany, with some support from the over-seas German Institute at Stuttgart, for a three years course of study to prepare for the principalship of this high school. A general school board has supervision of the educational

system of the colony. In course of time teacher's associations, and teacher's institutes were established.

This is in Fernheim. The Canadian brethren, though they too stress the need of perpetuating their religious and social ideals through their school system, yet their educational ideals are not of a high order. They perhaps have learned nothing of educational methods or ideals since their forefathers left their Prussian homes for south Russia more than a century ago. The whole objective of the school system in their minds is to teach their children to remain in the church, and to be good Germans. These two goals achieved, there is little further need for schooling. In fact, these two goals are interdependent and inseparable, and nothing dares in the least to interfere with the pursuit of these objectives. Every suggestion of a worldly influence is tabooed, worldly textbooks on science, history and even mathematics. The only books permitted in the schoolroom are the primer, catechism, and the Bible. The direct purpose of the school is to teach the child to read, write, to cipher a bit, but not too much, and to sing. School attendance is compulsory and there is no illiteracy among the folks in Menno. Teachers, ill-prepared for their work usually, divide their time between farming and teaching, serving with very little pay.

School methods, imported no doubt from their ancestral homes generations ago, are standardized. A few samples of the daily routine may not be out of order here. A typical school day in Menno begins with song and prayer after which the children recite in sing-song fashion a long poem of twenty-three stanzas of four verses each. The first three go as follows:

*Das erste was Du thust
Wenn Du erwachest frueh
Sei ein Gebet zu Gott,
Kind, das versaeume nie.*

*Dann stehe schleunig auf
Und biete guten Morgen
Den Eltern, die fuer Dich
Mit treuer Liebe sorgen.*

*Dann wasch und reinige Dich
Zieh ordentlich Dich an;
Unreinlich darfst Du nie
Dich Deinem Lehrer nahn.*

The forenoon closes with a recital of the books of the Bible, arranged in rhyme, somewhat after the fashion of the old New England primer. The first of five stanzas reads as follows:

*In des alten Bundes Schriften
Merke in der ersten Stell'
Mose, Josua, und Richter
Ruth, und zwei von Samuel,
Zwei der Koenige, Chronik, Esra
Nehemia und Ester mit
Hiob, Psalter, dann die Sprueche
Prediger und Hohelied.*

In the afternoon session, after song and prayer, the children in unison repeat the multiplication table, closing the school day by counting up to 100 forward and backward. The next day and many days following, this program is repeated without variation.²

² See Dr. W. Quiring—*Deutsche erschlieszen den Chaco*. p. 177.

Religion

In Fernheim all three of the prevailing branches of the Russian Mennonite church are represented—the Old Mennonites (*Kirchliche Mennoniten*), the Mennonite Brethren, and the Evangelical Mennonites, though the last form only a small contingent of less than one hundred members. Realizing the need, however, of cooperation in their religious as well as in their economic life in the

midst of their primitive surroundings, these three groups have united their forces through a *Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten* (KfK) in all their religious efforts except in their baptismal and communion exercises. The Mennonite Brethren, being strict immersionists, do not admit members from the non-immersionist branches to either membership or fellowship around the communion table without rebaptism.

Mission festivals, choral singing, Bible conferences, evangelistic meetings, observance of the various church holy days play an important role in the religious life of the Chaco refugees, especially among the Mennonite Brethren, as they did in Russia. The colony is well blessed with preachers.

The youth problem has given the Fernheim leaders no little concern at times. The ten years of Bolshevik influence in Russia were not without influence even on Mennonite youth. Disrespect for their elders, loose ideals of social conduct, liberal thinking in matters of religious faith—all these influences tended to threaten the harmony of the churches. Under the guidance of Fritz Kliwer, the high school teacher, and other progressive leaders, a youth organization was formed, with branches in various villages, which by sponsoring music festivals, Bible study, and dramatic performances, gradually directed the activities of some of the unruly youth into higher levels of social life.

In the Menno colony the three different groups that left Canada finally united into one ecclesiastical body. Being very conservative in their religious practises as in everything else, they brought with them into the Chaco all the traditions to which they had been accustomed in their home land. They tolerate no choral singing in their worship; but each congregation retains several *Vor-singers* who lead the worshippers in old time hymns, sung

slowly and in unison. Prayer is carried on in silence, the worshippers kneeling. Preachers read their sermons from manuscript not of their own composition. The seven preachers compared with the fifty-four in Fernheim is not to be regarded as indicative of less religious zeal on the part of the former, but rather as evidence that among the latter persecution under Russian communism was especially directed against the religious leaders.

The new Fernheim daughter colony at Friesland is not as well organized as the parent colony, and is less prosperous economically. The special privileges, including military exemption granted the original settlements do not apply to the newer settlements.

BRAZIL

About one-fourth of the Moscow refugees who had been temporarily housed in the German military barracks decided to accept the German offer of free transportation to Santa Catharina in southern Brazil where, near Blumenau, a flourishing German city of some five thousand, a large German colony had been established some hundred years earlier. Near here the Hanseatic Colonization Society, founded some years before to promote German colonization in Brazil, still had a large area of unoccupied primitive forest land on the western fringe of the German settlement, for which it desired settlers. It was with this society that the Mennonites contracted for their land, at a rather high price, but on the instalment plan.

The land selected was located just below the tropics, in the foothills along the *Alto Rio Krauel*, a tributary of the Itajahi, which in turn flows eastward into the Pacific. Although only one hundred and fifty miles from the coast, and forty from the nearest railway, this was still a primeval forest of sub-tropical hardwoods, and a tangled

mass of underbrush. The nearest town of any size, Blumenau, was one hundred miles distant seaward.

The first group of Mennonite colonists, consisting of one hundred and eighty persons, aided by the German government with transportation expenses on credit, and by the German Red Cross with necessary household utensils, left Hamburg under the leadership of Heinrich Martens, on a German liner in mid-winter of 1930; and reached their Brazilian destination in southern mid-summer, about a month later. Other transports followed during the succeeding months, until by the end of the year nearly one thousand Mennonite refugees had reached the wilderness along the Krauel, eager to begin life all over again with practically nothing of this world's goods except a financial obligation that would doom them to a life of toil for many years to come. In 1934 several hundred of the Harbin refugees found their way to the Brazil colony.

Two separate settlements were established. The first comers located along the *Krauel*, the later arrivals, finding the Krauel valley already well-filled, were forced rather reluctantly to move some miles inland upon an elevated plateau about twenty-five hundred feet above sea level, called *Plateau Stoltz*. The Krauel settlement was divided into three districts respectively, *Witmarsum*, which ultimately became the headquarters for the whole group; *Waldheim*, and *Gnadenthal*. The Plateau Stoltz group named their settlement *Auhagen*, after the German official who was of great service to the Moscow refugees in the flight from Russia to Germany.

Unlike the Russian Mennonites elsewhere, these Brazilians did not congregate in villages, but each family located on its own farm tract of one hundred acres, more or less. This was due perhaps partly to the difficulty of clearing enough of the woodland immediately for vil-

lage sites. They kept the usual form of local government, however, with the *Schultz*, the *Oberschultz*, and other local officials, as had been their custom in Russia.

Early Hardships

Like their Paraguayan brethren, the Mennonites along the Krauel, too, passed through a period of great disappointment and disillusionment, and despair, almost, at times. Coming as they did from the broad wheat-fields of Siberia, where their labor at least was lightened by the use of immense horse-drawn harvesters, they found that here in the Brazilian jungles their first task was to clear by axe and saw enough of a lot on which to erect their first rude log huts; then by further hand labor to extend the clearing for sufficient room in which to plant the beans, sweet potatoes, or kaffir corn with which to feed themselves. It would take years of hard work before sufficient land would be cleared to even raise enough food for a modest living, and a full generation before they could pay off their debts. Of a marketable product there seemed none except *aipim*, a root plant strong in starch content; but so long as they were far from market, and without a starch factory, *aipim* could not be grown with profit. In course of time, however, it became the chief cash crop. The excess of moisture also, and the tropical sun encouraged the growth of rank weeds and underbrush almost as fast as it could be cleared, greatly adding to the farmer's labor. Farming thus by hand with spade and hoe, instead of horse-drawn machinery, was of the most primitive nature.

There were several encouraging factors in the situation, however. The climate, though tropical, yet, especially on the plateau, was not unbearable; and health conditions remained fairly good. There was no dying time as in Paraguay. The colonists received substantial finan-

cial aid, too, from their Dutch brethren, who made the Brazilian venture their special charge. Through Ds. S. H. N. Gorter, pastor of the Rotterdam Mennonite church, and chairman of the Dutch Emigration Bureau, substantial sums of money were sent to the settlers for the purchase of livestock, for the establishing of schools, the erection of a starch factory, which made possible the marketing of the aipim products, and for other needed purposes. In course of time, too, more land was cleared, better houses were built, and more roads opened; cooperative stores, mills, factories and creameries were established. The whole enterprise, however, has not yet passed beyond the experimental stage.

Naturally these hard living conditions in the original settlements drove a number of the settlers to look for more favorable locations elsewhere in which to establish permanent homes. Many of the younger people soon found their way into the larger coast cities, into domestic service, or into factory work and clerical positions. Parents frequently followed their children. By 1935 a mass movement had begun, especially from the Auhagen settlement for a new location near *Curitiba*, a city some distance to the north, which threatened for a time to depopulate all Auhagen. As it was, only some thirty families remained. The population of the *Curitiba* group now numbers about five hundred. Some of these settled near the city. Most of them located nearby and became interested in the dairy industry. A recent visitor to this colony states that each morning some fifty trucks loaded with milk leave various parts of the country side carrying a large part of the milk supply for the city.

This exodus from both of the older colonies to the newer one at *Curitiba* as well as to other towns has been the cause of a certain amount of friction between the older colonies to the new. Some of those who have left,

by renouncing their financial obligations assumed by the group as a whole at the time of their first migration have thereby made this burden harder for those who remained. It is more difficult also to maintain the religious solidarity of the small groups thus scattered about throughout all these centers. Mennonites in the past have been able to hold their own only when they lived in compact farm settlements.

Church and School

Here, too, all there of the branches of the church were represented, with the Mennonite Brethren in the lead numerically. Although retaining their separate divisional organization and church fellowship yet the three groups have united under a *Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten* (KfK) for safeguarding their common religious and cultural interests, and frequently for common worship. Each settlement, too, showed the usual concern for maintaining an efficient school system. In 1933 a Central school was established at Witmarsum, the so-called county seat.

Unlike the Paraguayan and Mexican colonies, the Brazilian Mennonites, as noted elsewhere, were not offered any special concessions by the Brazilian government as an inducement to their settlement here—no military exemption, no local political control, and no promises of a free school system. At first, they were permitted considerable liberty in conducting their own schools in their own German language; but a recent governmental decree demands that in all the schools of the land the language of instruction must be Portuguese, and the teachers must be native-born. As for military service, that question need not be a matter of immediate concern, since such service is demanded only of citizens; and the

native-born Mennonite children will not grow up to military age for several years to come. The time is not far distant, however, when this question must be met, unless, like their German and Dutch brethren in Europe, the Brazilian Mennonites, too, will discard the traditional Mennonite peace doctrine.

In 1932 Peter Klassen founded a German paper called *Die Bruecke*, devoted to the religious and cultural interests of the colony. Owing to lack of support, and especially to the governmental demand that translations of the paper be also made in the Portuguese language, the venture unfortunately had to suspend in 1938.

Dr. H. A. Fast, representing the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America, in his recent visit to the South American Mennonites, reports that he was received with open arms by the Russian colonies in both Paraguay and Brazil; but with some suspicion by the conservative Canadians in Menno. He reports further that all of them were making a brave fight against great odds both to maintain their economic existence as well as their religious faith; but that the struggle is a hard one.

Culturally, the Moscow refugees all continue to look to the Mennonites of Germany for their religious and spiritual guidance, though to North America for financial support. Unfortunately the influence of German Mennonitism, saturated as it is with its Nazi political ideology, and its war justification, is not conducive to the preservation of the old Russian Mennonite traditions, especially the old peace traditions.

It is doubtful whether Brazilian Mennonitism, to say nothing about that of Paraguay, will be able to maintain for long its essential faith against the blighting influences of its native opposition, and German Nazi ideals.

Might this not be a real challenge to the General

Conference to help save the South Americans for the faith of the fathers, by sending them a messenger of good will occasionally from the North, and furnish them, without cost, the *Bundesbote*, and other American Mennonite-German periodicals and literature. The gesture would be welcomed with enthusiasm by the brethren to the South. To keep Mennonites, already established, from sinking back into heathen ways of thinking is as worthy a missionary venture as to transform heathen into good Mennonites.

XVI

CULTURE AND PROGRESS

The American Mennonites, it will be observed, are not a homogeneous and united group, with a single ecclesiastical organization. They came from widely scattered sections of Europe, at various times, with different social backgrounds. These social differences, transplanted to a pioneer society in America, intensified or still further differentiated, perhaps, by settling in isolated communities here, subjected occasionally to the uncertainties of an arbitrary leadership and the disintegrating influences of a loosely organized form of congregational government—all these account for the twenty odd varieties of Mennonitism found this side of the Atlantic.

Like the Puritans of New England, however, the Mennonites, too, in a way have been a sifted people, sifted on the basis of a tender conscience against religious intolerance, political autocracy, and especially against the iniquities of the war system. The most conscientious, perhaps the most hard pressed economically, the younger element frequently came to America. Although held together by the common bond of all the fundamental beliefs of orthodox Mennonitism, they have been separated by inconsequential, though irreconcilable details of social and religious practise.

For purposes of convenience all these different branches of the church may be roughly arranged into three broad groups—*Conservatives*, *Liberals* and *Moderates*, remembering, however, that all are still conservative in their theology, and true to the teaching of Menno Si-

mons, including his views on baptism upon confession of faith, rejection of the oath, non-resistance, together with antisecrecy and perhaps several other principles not particularly stressed by Menno, though no doubt implied in his general religious system.

Under the head of *Conservatives* might be listed the following distinct branches—Old Order Amish, Wisler Mennonites, Church of God in Christ (Holdemanites), Old Colonists (Canada and Mexico), Kleine Gemeinde, Hutterites (not always classed with Mennonites), Reformed Mennonites, and several other small unnamed divisions. The total population,¹ including children, of this group is approximately fifty thousand. All these are still inclined to insist on various rigid dress regulations—bonnets, prayer-head coverings, aprons for the women, plain coats and simple clothes for the men with slight variations as to particular cut, a tendency toward broad-brimmed hats, and hooks and eyes among the Amish; beards among both the Amish and the Holdemanites, but smooth shaven faces among the Wislerites; boots for the ministers among the Old Colonists. Proscribed also are mixed marriages, even with members of related branches, schooling beyond the elementary grades, religious affiliation with any other church, holding of public office, and in many cases taking part in elections; in some cases Sunday schools, mission enterprises, and evangelistic services. The Amish have no meeting houses. All these branches still make frequent use of the church ban and the practise of avoidance; also footwashing. Preachers of course are untrained, unsalaried, and chosen by lot.

The so-called *Liberals* with a total population of per-

1 Wherever in this chapter or in any other, the term total population is used, children are also included, which about doubles the actual adult membership. In Europe the total population is usually quoted since the state churches, practising infant baptism, also include the children as members.

haps one hundred and twenty thousand, include the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, the Central Conference, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, and most of the recent immigrants from Russia to South America and Canada. The General Conference embraces about seventy-five thousand of the total population of the group. This group has discarded practically all dress regulations, the ban against mixed marriages, and the holding of public office, though they are still strictly non-resistant on the question of war. They favor a salaried and educated ministry. The General Conference supports several colleges and numerous secondary schools. The Mennonite Brethren in Christ are the most evangelistic in the group, and have grown more through non-Mennonite converts than any other branch of the church. The whole group affiliates more freely than any of the rest with other denominations, the General Conference, as already suggested, having been a member of the Federal Council of Churches for a time.

Among the *Moderates*, which embrace a total population of about one hundred and fifty thousand, are included the Old Mennonites, comprising nearly two-thirds of the entire group, Mennonite Brethren (Russian), Amish-Conservative, Defenseless Mennonites, Sommerfelders, and several other small Canadian groups, and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (formerly Bruderthalers). All these may be regarded as occupying a middle ground between the Conservative and Liberal groups in their religious practises. Most of them still discourage extravagance, and conformity to changing fashions in dress, though not so strict as the Conservatives. The Old Mennonites officially prescribe the bonnet, and in Pennsylvania the cape for the women, and the prayer-head covering, though they are finding it increasingly difficult to enforce these regulations, especially among the young

people. The Defenseless Mennonites do not insist on dress restrictions. All practise foot-washing, though avoidance has been discarded. Few have a salaried or specially trained ministry, though there is a growing tendency to demand of their ministers a certain degree of special training and a growing realization that a certain amount of material support is necessary. All are generous in their support of missions. Office holding in general is discouraged, but most of them exercise the right of suffrage. All favor higher education for their young people. The Old Mennonites support Goshen College, and several junior colleges. The Mennonite Brethren sponsor Tabor College. The other branches in this group are too small to have schools of their own, but they send their young people to the schools of the other branches. The more or less emotionally inclined, as well as those inclined toward fundamentalism among the Liberals and Moderates, often prefer certain fundamentalistic small colleges of other denominations rather than their own Mennonite colleges of higher standards and saner religious views.

The above total Mennonite population of over three hundred thousand, includes all the Americas—the United States, Canada, Mexico and South America. The twenty-five thousand recent immigrants are included in the above figures; but while these latter may be Americans geographically, they can not as yet be counted as Americans culturally. Their culture is still German-Russian.

Early Confessions of Faith

The essential doctrinal unity of the American Mennonites is evidenced by the adoption of common confessions of faith. All the Conservatives and most of the Moderates have agreed upon the conservative Dordrecht confession which, in addition to the commonly accepted

Mennonite doctrines, includes the practise of shunning, or avoiding all those who have been excommunicated from the church in "eating or drinking or other such like social matters," in order, so says the confession, "not to become defiled by intercourse with him and become partakers of his sin," and also "that he may be made ashamed," under the mistaken notion that by this method the "ashamed" sinner may again be drawn back into the fold. As just stated, however, this article of the Dordrecht confession is no longer observed except by the Conservative group. This confession also prescribes foot-washing; and marriage only "in the Lord," which among such as still follow this statement, is interpreted to mean only with another member of the same branch of the church.

This Dordrecht statement of Mennonite principles which had been officially approved by the Alsatian and Palatine Mennonites in 1660, before the Amish separation, was printed by the Pennsylvania Mennonites on the Bradford press in Philadelphia as early as 1727, and was the very first Mennonite book to be printed in America, and strange to say in English. It has been frequently reprinted since, and universally accepted by the groups above mentioned.

The more liberal Cornelis Ris confession, translated into German from the Dutch in 1849, by C. J. van der Smissen, the Wadsworth professor, but at the former date pastor of the Mennonite church at Friedrichstadt, Germany, was published in English in 1902, by the General Conference, and became the accepted statement of the Mennonite faith of the more tolerant group. Of course some of the immigrants of the middle nineteenth century also favored other confessions. The Cornelis Ris statement agrees with that of Dordrecht in the fundamentals, though differing somewhat in non-essential details. It

is slightly more philosophical and tolerant than the latter. It is silent on foot-washing and shunning. Marriage with "unbelievers" is forbidden as is divorce, except on Scriptural grounds.

In recent years there has been a tendency to revise the old confessions to make room for new practises and doctrines that are continually knocking for admission into the church.

Church Government

In their church government the Mennonites are strictly congregational, with a decided inclination, however, among the large compact settlements of the Old Mennonites in southeastern Pennsylvania to group a number of congregations into bishop's districts under a bishop who assumes considerable ecclesiastical authority within his district. The Mennonite Brethren in Christ, too, have adopted a church polity somewhat semi-episcopal in form, with presiding elders in control of definite jurisdictions. But in general among all the other branches, and most completely in the case of the General Conference branch the congregations are entirely independent, choose their own ministers and regulate their own affairs. Conferences have only advisory powers, with no disciplinary control over either members or congregations, except to exclude from Conference membership in case of serious disagreement. In the General Conference a two-thirds vote of all the membership is required to vote out a member congregation.

Among the Conservatives and most of the Moderates the ministers are chosen from the congregation, usually by lot, without previous preparation, conviction, consent, or qualifications, for life and without material remuneration. The method of selection does not vary much in different congregations. In the Franconia Conference

among the Old Mennonites, on the appointed day of the selection, such candidates as are thought worthy of the ministry by a vote of the congregation, stand before the pulpit desk upon which are placed as many books of uniform appearance, usually hymn books, as there are candidates. Into each book a slip of paper has been placed, one of which contains the fateful passage from Proverbs "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord." The unfortunate recipient of this paper slip must then preach the rest of his days whether qualified or not; and except for gross misdemeanor the congregation has no recourse but to listen to him. Since he is the Lord's choice there is no backing down for either preacher or congregation. If perchance it is absolutely impossible for the the minister thus chosen to serve his people in preaching he yet must retain his office and perform such minor duties as his limited capacities afford. The lot may be cast again among a new set of candidates in the hope that Providence, if given another chance, may be more successful.

The Liberal wing of the denomination, of course, has long ago outgrown this ancient Mennonite method of choosing its ministers, and there is a very strong movement also among most of the Moderates in the same direction.

Sense of Other Worldliness

The first Mennonite immigrants to America, both the Pennsylvanians, as well as the later Swiss, and the Russians in Kansas and Manitoba brought with them from their ancestors the traditional Mennonite sense of other-worldliness and suspicion of the ruling authorities. Although no longer persecuted here as in Europe, yet their life in compact isolated communities, as well as their non-resistant principles which forbade their taking of

human life in maintaining a stable social order, tended to keep them out of politics here.

With the exception of an unsuccessful experiment among the rather liberal Crefelders in Germantown, the early Mennonites never held office, nor participated in political affairs even where they were in the majority. Although rural Lancaster county was first settled almost solidly by Mennonites, yet the political subdivisions were organized, named and ruled by the small number of English and Scotch-Irish who had moved in among the Mennonites. The only Mennonite names, or even German names one finds are those of small way stations in honor of some nearby farmer, Eby's Post Office, Herrville, Witmer station, Neffsville, etc.

The Russians, too, in the West tried to retain at first as much as possible of the local political freedom which they had enjoyed in their home land, in Manitoba even being allowed for a good many years the control of their schools and considerable lee-way in the handling of their local civil affairs.

To this day both the Conservatives and the Moderates still oppose the holding of public office by their members, with the exception of such local positions as school director or road overseer. Most of the Moderates, however, make free use of the right to vote. The Liberals have no objection to the holding of office except such as might compel them to enforce capital punishment.

With the exception of the Conservatives, the objection to office holding does not include affiliation with the political parties which elect the officers. While the Mennonites may differ in their party affiliations in various sections of the country, in any given area they are likely to be of the same political faith. The Pennsylvanians, like their fellow Germans and the Quakers, joined the Republican party largely, no doubt, because of the attitude

of that party toward slavery and rebellion. The Russians, settling on the western plains under the liberal land laws passed by the Republicans, also joined that party. The Swiss in Ohio and Indiana, on the other hand, arriving on the frontier during the days of Andrew Jackson, became Democrats. The children and grandchildren of all these have remained true to the political faith of their fathers. Most of us inherit both our religion and our politics. The Russians in Canada have usually voted for the Liberal candidates because that party, especially since the late world war, has been more sympathetic toward their interests than has the Conservative party. Mennonites have never affiliated with the Socialist parties.

Mennonite Virtues

The American Church, too, has retained to a large extent the traditional emphasis of the early Mennonites on right living as an essential part of true religion—the virtues especially of honesty, integrity, simplicity, truthfulness, genuine trustworthiness and a high moral standard of family life. Divorce in this land of hasty marriage and easy separation is almost unheard of among the Mennonites.

German Language and Culture

Linguistically and culturally the Mennonities in America, with the exception of a small group of Dutch in Germantown and another near Elkhart, Indiana, have been Germans, whether they came direct from the Palatinate, Switzerland, France, Prussia or Russia. The Pennsylvanians were German-Swiss who had lived for a time in the Palatinate, or in southeastern France. The Russians came originally from Holland, but through a residence of two centuries in Prussia they had absorbed a German

culture which another hundred years in Russia could not wear off. Pennsylvania "Dutch" remained for nearly two centuries the common means of social intercourse among the Pennsylvania Mennonites; and some form of high German the language of the pulpit. Among these, German as a language has just passed, with the exception of the Old Order Amish among whom an English sermon would be just as much out of place as buttons, or short hair.

Among the western Russians, German is about half way out except in Canada where it is still dominant among the Old Colonists, and other Conservatives; and of course among the recent immigrants, though these latter are anxious to learn as quickly as possible the language of their adopted country. The household tongue of the Russians is some form of the "Low Dutch" brought from Russia by way of the lowlands of the Vistula.

The picturesque Pennsylvania "Dutch" is basically the Palatine dialect of the early eighteenth century with the admixture of an occasional English word that for one reason or another was drafted into the vernacular. Pastorius himself was one of the first to yield to the temptation of mixing the two tongues. In a letter written to the Frankfort Land Company in Germany, he attributed his inability to protect the interests of his company against rival claimants with these words, *Ich fand das alle Lawyers gefeed waren.*

Generally the English words are much fewer than supposed however, as this popular poem in the vernacular indicates.

DIE NEIE SORT DSCHENT'LEIT.

O heert, ihr lieuwe Leit, was sin des Zeite:

Das unser eens noch dess erlewe musz
'Neder Bauerbuh musz Kaerridsch reide,

*Un Baure-Maed, die schleppe rum in Seide
Un Niemand nimmt an all dem Schtolz Verdrusz.*

*'N eegne Boghie hot en jeder Bauerbuh
'N schrier Gaul un G'scherr mit Silberb'schlege druf,
Un plenti Zehregeld ah im Sack—, do is kee Ruh,
Amm Samschdag gehn die Dschent'lleit 'm Schted'l zu
Und schtelle dort am deirschte Wertshaus uf.*

*Wie is des junge Baurefolk doch ufgedresst,
Wie hewe se die Kepp so schteif un hoch
Wie dhun se in die schtolze Faesch'ns renne,
M'r kann se nimme vun die Schtadleit kenne,
Sie mache all ihr Hochmut-Wege mit.*

*Der Vater denkt, Was hab ich schmaerte Sehne,
Die Mutter sagt, Mei Maed die kumme raus,
So Schteil koscht Geld. Ja well, m'r kann jo lehne.
Sell geht'n Weil, bass uf, du werschtes ball sehne,
Der Vatter "geht d'r Bungert Fens ball 'naus."*

*Vor Alters war es als en Sinn un Schand,
Meh Schulde mache as m'r zahle kann;
'Sis net meh so: m'r gebt juscht Notis dorch die Editors
Mer het geclos't, un deht cumpounde mit de creditors,
Wer so betriegt, der is en Dscdhentllmann.*

*Wie lebt m'r nau? Ich sehn du weeschst noch nix,
M'r lebt juscht wie d'rvoor: des fixt die Lah;
M'r eegent nix—die Fraa hots all in Hand,
M'r is ihr Edschent, maenedscht Geld un Land;
Un geht nau in die Koscht bei seiner Fraa.²*

With the English words left out this language would not be unintelligible in many parts of the upper Rhine today. If a Pennsylvania Mennonite were to stand on a street corner of Heidelberg today and, closing his eyes, listen to the casual conversation of the passerby he might easily think himself back in Allentown. Some years ago the author, in course of a visit to the Saar region was

2 Taken from Harbaughs Harfe.

standing on a village railway platform one evening by a waiting train to return to Saarburg. The engineer and train-dispatcher were engaged in a spirited conversation at the head of the train discussing some matter of procedure, while the impatient conductor was on the rear platform anxious for the discussion to end. *Was is letz* I asked in what I thought was good Alsatian vernacular. *Wen Sie net bal ufhoere babble*, he said, *komme Sie nie Hehm*, in words that would make any wandering Pennsylvania Dutchman homesick.

The everyday Low German as spoken today among the western Russians, too, no doubt does not differ greatly from that known in the lowlands of West Prussia several centuries ago. The following nursery rhyme with which the pioneer Kansas mothers rocked their babies to sleep, no doubt, would be readily understood along the lower Vistula whence it came.

Otboa langnes sett upp sine greeni Wes
Haft rodi Stewilkes aun
Sitt aus een Adelman
Wannea woat he waddi komi?
Opt Joa, opt Joa,
Wann die Roggi ripi
Wann die Poggi pipi
Wann die Kalwa blori
Enn die Deri knori
Pip Mus, Otboa es tus.

Education

The leaders among the early Anabaptists and Mennonites were usually learned men—priests, university trained men and sometimes university professors. In course of a few years, however, the leaders were all killed off by persecution, and the rank and file driven under cover. Educated doctors of theology were usually hand in glove with the magistrates in driving the Mennonites

to a martyrs stake, or hounding them out of the country. Under such conditions higher training was neither possible nor popular. In lieu of theologians and priests Mennonites depended upon direct access to the Bible for their religious instruction. But to know the Bible it was necessary to read. Sufficient schooling to enable their children to read consequently was universal among the Mennonites. There was far less illiteracy among them than among the average common folk of their day. Their opponents all marvelled at their knowledge of the Bible.

This interest in elementary schooling, the Mennonites brought with them to Pennsylvania. In Germantown they started a school even before they had a church house. When Pastorius began his subscription school several years later the Mennonites became its chief supporters. Every congregation in colonial Pennsylvania had its local institution of learning supported by the congregation usually and kept sometimes by a pious Mennonite, quite frequently by a wandering school master not so pious, frequently in a church house, occasionally in a home or a special school building. The best known among these Mennonite pioneer school masters was Christopher Dock who, because he was found dead one evening after school hours kneeling at his desk in the attitude of prayer, has been called the "pious school master of the Skippack" by one of his admirers.

Being a successful teacher, Dock was invited by Christopher Sauer, the well known Germantown publisher, and a former pupil, to write out his method of teaching for the benefit of other teachers. The modest schoolmaster consented but with the request that the work was not to be published until after his death. This request was honored by the publisher and so the *Schulordnung* which is regarded today as the first work on the art of teaching to be published in America, did not appear

in print until 1770, after both Dock and Sauer the elder had died.

Like all the Mennonite schools of that day, and perhaps other similar institutions of learning as well, Dock's school paid much attention to religion. The New and Old Testaments were used as texts, and as a basis for the reading and writing exercises. It was the usual "blab" school, that is all the studying was done audibly; and silence during the study period became a misdemeanor, though required during the recitation period by all those not engaged in the recitation. Dock describes in the *Schulordnung* how he maintains silence during the recitation period—

"I walk up and down the room, and when I think they have learned their lesson I order them to be quiet and then appoint a monitor, who has been detailed for this duty. He stands on a bench or other high place where he can see all, and reports the Christian and surname of each one who talks, studies loud, or does anything else that is forbidden."

Dock was a born teacher. Discussing the need of winning the respect of the pupils rather than their fear, he says "I have a great love for children, a grace from God, otherwise it would be a great burden among the scholars."

This *Schulordnung* went through two later editions, but is known today only among the antiquarians and students of the history of colonial education. Dock also wrote a number of poems, and *A Hundred Rules for Children*. Some of these rules are interesting including this one on table manners. *Rule 34*. "The bones, or what remains over, do not throw under the table, do not put them under the tablecloth, but let them lie on the edge of the plate."

When the public school system was introduced into Pennsylvania the Mennonites as well as the other re-

ligious denominations fought the movement out of fear that religion would be barred from the curriculum. In course of time, however, the Mennonites in the East all became reconciled to the public school system, and since then there has been little demand for elementary parochial schools among them.

The later immigrants, however, from south Germany and the Russians during the past century were more concerned about keeping control of the education of their children; and most of them for a time supplemented the regular public system with additional parochial schools where religion and German were given a conspicuous place in the curriculum.

In the pioneer settlements along the western frontier where the Russian Mennonites lived in compact school districts, and at a time when the school laws were still quite lenient, they had little difficulty in maintaining such schools as met their needs, giving ample time to both religion and German. But where the Mennonites constituted only a part of the school population, and when the educational requirements demanded by the state became more rigid, the demand for the favorite subjects were satisfied by special church or private schools held during the summer months after the close of the regular public school year, which for some time was rather short. Today the demand, especially since the late war, for German is waning in our own west, though still strong among the Canadian Russians; the religious interests are being satisfied by the establishing of a number of local Bible schools throughout various congregations on both sides of the international boundary line.

In Manitoba the Mennonites were granted almost complete control, it will be remembered, over their schools by the Provincial and Dominion governments at the time of their settlement. But their school experiences are told

in another chapter, and no further reference is needed here except to remember that after the war the provincial authorities in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba insisted on the establishing of public schools in all the Mennonite settlements to replace the former church controlled schools, and also upon the exclusive use of the English language as a means of instruction. German even as a subject of study was to be barred. As already noticed some six or seven thousand of the more conservative Mennonites from the Old Colonists and Sommerfelders preferred another trek to Mexico and Paraguay rather than to give up the use of their German. Those who remained finally realized that they could be good Mennonites even in the English tongue—a choice they have had no occasion to regret since.

In the field of higher education there seemed little of interest among any of the Mennonites until well into the middle of the past century. It was only natural that the Liberal wing of the church should be the first to awaken to the need of better training for its young people, especially training for church leadership.

The demand for a church school especially among the Russian and south German churches in the West did not die with Wadsworth, however. Soon after the closing of the Ohio institution the Kansas Conference established a small *Vorbereitungsschule* in the Alexanderwohl congregation near Newton, Kansas, with H. H. Ewert as principal in 1882. The next year a building was erected at Halstead, and the institution was maintained under the same management as a *Fortbildungsschule*. Mr. Ewert remained in charge of the institution until 1890 when he was called to head the pioneer educational work among the Mennonites of Manitoba. In 1893, in the meantime the Halsted institution gave way to Bethel College at Newton which was controlled by a voluntary association,

but with Conference sanction and support. David Goerz, one of the pioneer immigrants, became the business manager of the college, and from this time until his death in 1914, devoted his best efforts to the educational interests of his people. C. H. Wedel as president of the faculty was made the educational head, which position he held until his death in 1910. Bethel College has made its influence felt strongly throughout the western churches from the beginning, furnishing many of the church leaders and missionaries. Some years ago an attempt was made to bring the school directly under the control of the Western District Conference, but so far this has not been accomplished. Under the efficient presidency of Dr. Ed. Kaufman the College has made rapid progress in recent years; and in 1938 was admitted into membership of the North Central Association of Colleges, the first of the Mennonite institutions to achieve this recognition.

The Old Mennonites did not awaken to the need of a church school of higher learning until within the last thirty-five years, and even then there was very little sentiment in favor of such an institution in the branch of the church mentioned. Goshen College owes its existence to the foresight of a small group of progressive men who realized that young and efficient leadership could be secured and maintained only through an educational institution controlled by the church. In 1895, this group of men formed an association and secured funds for a building at Elkhart, Indiana, for a preparatory and Bible school. This institution called Elkhart Institute, was the outgrowth of a private normal and business school founded several years earlier. In 1902, the school was moved to Goshen and enlarged into a college under the name of Goshen College. This college has already trained most of the foreign missionaries and many of the younger leaders of the church. In the long list of early

leaders in the history of this pioneer institution among the Old Mennonites and former Amish-Mennonites, John S. Coffman, pioneer evangelist, who took a leading part in the founding of the Elkhart school, and was the president of the Board of Trustees until his death in 1899, and Jonas S. Hartzler, who as secretary and treasurer for over twenty years bore the chief financial burden of both schools, which often were exceedingly arduous, have already been mentioned. Noah E. Byers, first as principal of the Elkhart school, and later as president of Goshen College, moulded the early educational policy of the institution during the formative years.^{2a}

The Mennonite Brethren, as already suggested after co-operating for a few years with the Dunkard college at McPherson, Kansas, in their educational work, founded their own school in 1908, Tabor College, at Hillsboro, Kansas. A fire in 1918 destroyed the entire plant, but a vigorous campaign for funds secured \$100,000 for new equipment. Among the leaders in the founding and early management of Tabor College were H. W. Lohrenz, an early president, and D. E. Harder, secretary, a member of the Krimmer Brueder who are affiliated with the Bruedergemeinde in their educational work. Tabor College has since been reduced to the status of a junior college.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ also attempted to found a Bible Training school at Elkhart in 1902. A small group of Indiana members secured the Elkhart Institute boulding in which a school was held for several years, but owing to opposition and lack of support the work had to be abandoned.

Bluffton College was originally known as Central Mennonite College, an institution which was founded

^{2a} Goshen College has also recently been admitted to the North Central Association of Colleges.

by the Middle District of the General Conference in 1900, first as an academy but later as a junior college. In 1914 the school was enlarged into a full fledged senior college and seminary through the co-operation of members from five different branches of the denomination, the Middle and Eastern Districts of the General Conference, the Central Conference, the Defenseless Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren in Christ, and the Old Mennonites. At present only two branches, the Middle and Eastern Districts of the General Conference and the Central Conference are officially represented on the Board of Trustees, although members are unofficially selected from several other groups. The enlarged institution became known as Bluffton College and Mennonite Seminary.

This attempt at a union educational enterprise was largely the result of the efforts among others of two college presidents, S. K. Mosiman, of the Central Mennonite College, and N. E. Byers of Goshen College. The former was retained as the first president of the new college, and the latter as the first dean. J. H. Langenwalter, a former president of Bethel College, the following year became the first dean of the Seminary. Bluffton College has served the church and its young people well since its founding, sending out from its halls a number of missionaries, teachers, and leaders in other fields of educational and religious service.

In 1921 the seminary separated from the college and organized an independent board of trustees drawn from different branches of the church under the name of Witmarsum Theological Seminary. The institution remained located at Bluffton with J. E. Hartzler as president, and P. E. Whitmer as dean. Like Wadsworth, Witmarsum survived a scant ten years, justifying its brief existence, however, by training many of the missionaries and min-

isters now holding positions of influence in the different branches of the denomination. Unfortunately the seminary was allowed to suspend unnecessarily because its friends did not have the faith nor the sacrificial interest required to keep it alive. The Board of Trustees, however, remains intact and is contemplating the revival of another similar institution under different auspices.

Besides the institutions mentioned above, there are a number of junior colleges and special Bible and preparatory schools, among others Hesston College at Hesston, Kansas, and Eastern Mennonite School in Virginia, both of the Old Mennonites; Freeman College, supported largely by the local congregations of South Dakota and surrounding churches of the Northern District of the General Conference; and numerous Bible and secondary schools sponsored by local congregations among the western Canadian Russians largely under the heads of *Ver-einsschule*, *Vorbereitungsschule*, Bible school, etc.

From a study of attendance in 1938 of twenty Mennonite schools, three of which were senior colleges, four junior colleges, and the rest secondary and Bible schools, it was found that in that year there was a total attendance in all these institutions of about three thousand, of which about one-half were found in the senior and junior colleges. In the senior colleges Mennonite students constituted about one-half all told of the aggregate attendance in these institutions in the following order: Goshen College, 70 percent; in Bethel, 55 percent; and in Bluffton, 40 percent. In the preparatory schools the Mennonite contingent furnished a much larger proportion; while in the Bible schools the attendance was almost entirely composed of Mennonites.³

3 Dr. Silas Hertzler of Goshen College has each year for some years published in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* an interesting study of the attendance in the various Mennonite schools.

Missions

The cause of missions has always been closely connected with that of higher education. In fact it was for the purpose of training missionaries and other religious workers that the first advanced schools were founded. Missions and education, it will be remembered, were the chief subjects of discussion in the founding of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church in North America in 1860. The General Conference branch of the church was a pioneer among Mennonites in missions as in education, but this story is told in another chapter.

The Mennonite Brethren (Russian), too, early manifested an interest in the cause of missions, both foreign and home. They established their first missionary society in 1885, soon after their organization as an ecclesiastical body in America. At first, because of their close affiliation with the Baptist denomination both in Russia and America, and because of their paucity of numbers, they supported two native workers in India under the Baptist board, and a few years later another in Africa under the same auspices. In 1894 they also co-operated with the Baptists in work among the American Indians.

By 1899 the Brethren had grown sufficiently in numbers to start their first independent foreign mission in India. Today this branch of the church has missionaries in Africa, China and India as well as in many cities in the home land.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ, formed by the union of several earlier highly evangelistic bodies, were also deeply concerned from the beginning for the extension of its work through evangelistic and missionary effort. District evangelism and city mission work had been common among all the constituent groups before the formation of the united body. The first foreign mission-

ary from the Mennonite Brethren in Christ was one Eusebius Eby, an ardent promoter of home missions for many years, who as early as 1883 expressed a desire to enter foreign work. But he did not realize his wish until 1890, when he sailed for Africa, without church support, however, because of advanced age. He did not long survive the torrid Liberian heat, and was buried near the scene of his pioneer efforts. But his sacrifice was not without results. The Conference soon sent out other missionaries, and just before the late war this branch of the church had fifty active workers in the field in Africa, China, India, Armenia, Thibet, and South America, as well as in numerous North American cities.

Among the Old Mennonites and the former Amish-Mennonites as noted elsewhere, the missionary interests were closely allied with that of education and Sunday school conferences; and centered largely around the progressive congregation and publishing house at Elkhart, Indiana. The present Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, organized in 1906, and now in charge of all the benevolent and mission enterprises of the church, was the outgrowth of a number of earlier voluntary evangelistic and charitable organizations which grew up as the spirit of missions and benevolences developed, all organized by the Elkhart group—Evangelizing Committee in 1883; Mennonite Evangelizing and Benevolent Board, 1896; and the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities in 1906, with M. S. Steiner, of Ohio, as the first president.⁴ It will be remembered the first mission station established by this branch of the church was in Chicago in 1893; and the first foreign station in India, in 1898, following the great famine there, with W. B. Page of Indiana, and J. A. Ressler of Pennsylvania, and their wives, as the first mis-

⁴ The Lancaster county and Franconia Mennonites have their independent mission enterprise.

sionaries. In 1929 this branch of the church had one hundred and thirty-four workers in the various fields, home and foreign, with a total expenditure of more than three-quarters of a million dollars.⁵

The small group of Krimmer Brethren, too, brought their missionary zeal with them from Russia. Too small, however, to establish stations of their own, they were liberal supporters of the work of other groups. Since 1899 they have a mission enterprise among the negroes of North Carolina. In 1896 they also founded an orphans home in Kansas, but having no orphans of their own, they opened the establishment to outside sources, especially to children from the large cities. The experiment was not entirely a successful one, and the home has since been turned into an old people's home.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren is another small group that was not behind their Russian brethren in their benevolent interests.

Thus far there has not been much activity among the more conservative branches in any of these efforts—such groups as the *Kleine Gemeinde*, the Old Colonists, Old Order Amish, Reformed Mennonites, Wislerites, etc.

In addition to their support of the mission cause, Mennonites of all groups have been most generous contributors to every cause for the relief of human suffering. Especially since the war, contributions for the relief of their Russian brethren has mounted to several million dollars, besides a large amount of clothing, food and other necessary supplies.

Many of the larger branches of the denomination also support their own hospitals, old people's homes, tuberculosis sanitariums, besides mutual insurance companies and other fraternal organizations.

5 Dr. Ed. G. Kaufman, *The Development of the Mission and Philanthropic Interest Among the Mennonites of North America*, p. 236.

A good summary of the mission and charitable interests of the American Mennonites as a whole is found in Dr. Kaufman's recent book "The Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest among the Mennonites of North America." Dr. Kaufman says:

"The development of the missionary interest among the Mennonites has been accompanied by the development of other activities, all of which have mutually influenced each other. There are in America today (1931) eight Mennonite publishing houses, eight Mennonite higher educational institutions, twenty-five Mennonite hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the aged, and over seventy-five Mennonite city and rural missions. The Mennonites of America support and control sixteen foreign mission stations in India, Africa, South America, and among the American Indians. Since 1880, when their first missionaries entered the work, they have sent more than four hundred workers into the foreign field, not counting many who labored in non-Mennonite fields and under non-Mennonite boards. In these Mennonite foreign fields there are at present in round numbers, about sixty organized congregations, twelve thousand, five hundred church members with an equal number of children in mission schools, and more than two hundred and twenty-five missionaries at work. In recent years Mennonites of America have contributed more than \$400,000 annually for foreign missions alone. All this in fifty years."

Literature

The Mennonites likewise were not a literary folk. Being for the most part a rural people and of a religious turn of mind they had few ambitions beyond the desire to make an honest living for themselves and their families, and a passion to serve their God according to their convictions. The first comers to America brought few books with them, perhaps a well worn Bible, a copy of their Confession of Faith and a prayer book. Occasionally one might find a family owning an old Dutch copy of the Martyr Book, a family heirloom likely, and soon un-

readable by the younger generation. An occasional copy of the works of Menno Simons, too, in the same language could be found. The first meager supply of necessary books evidently was soon exhausted, for in 1708 the Germantown church wrote to Germany for a supply of Bibles, prayer books and catechisms.

In the course of time, however, the Mennonites wrote and published a good deal of reading matter. Professor H. S. Bender, in his *Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature* lists over eleven hundred separate titles of books and pamphlets written for and by Mennonites between 1727 and 1928. Few of these would rank very high as pure literature. They consist largely of doctrinal and controversial dissertations, local histories, hymn books, catechisms, year books, church papers, and similar works of a practical nature.

The first book printed expressly for the American Mennonites, strange to say, was an English edition of their Confession of Faith, issued at Amsterdam in 1712, and reprinted in Philadelphia in 1727. With one or two exceptions this was the only English edition of a standard Mennonite book for over a century and a half. The demand among the Mennonites at this particular time, according to the preface of the first edition, was for the purpose of setting themselves right with their fellow English colonists, for "the greatest part of the people doth not know what they (Mennonites) confess of the Word of God and by reason of that ignorance can't speak and judge rightly of their confession nor of the confessors themselves, nay through prejudice as a strange and unheard of thing do abhor them so as not to speak well but oftentimes ill of them."

The most highly prized book among the early Mennonites, next to the Bible, was the old Martyr Book. This book was highly regarded because it not only told of the

trials and sufferings of those of their own and kindred faiths, but often of those of their own blood; for many of the martyrs bore names still familiar among the Pennsylvania Mennonites and their descendants. The book was a voluminous work, as large as the old family Bible, and was available only in the Dutch language. The first European German edition did not appear until 1790.

There seemed little demand among the first generation of pioneers for more than the occasional copies of the book which the first settlers brought with them. But by the middle of the century the dangers which threatened the doctrine of non-resistance among their young people because of the colonial wars created a demand for their book of martyrs, written in a language that could be read by all. After attempting in vain to have the work published in Germany, the Pennsylvania churches contracted with the monks of the Ephrata cloister for an edition of thirteen hundred copies. The undertaking was an arduous one, and it took three years to finish it. The Ephrata Brethren were obliged to manufacture their own paper, make the translation from the Dutch into the German, and do all the printing and binding. The book was issued in 1748, a large volume of over fourteen hundred pages, the most ambitious publication undertaking in Pennsylvania up to that time. The *Martyrs Mirror* has gone through a number of editions since then, the last English edition coming from the press at Elkhart, Indiana, in 1887, and a German edition printed at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, as recently as 1916.

The various works of Menno Simons were also familiar, but these were printed only in fragments. Among Menno's treatises the most important is the *Foundation Book*, which contains the most complete statement of his views. This was printed as a pamphlet at Lancaster in 1794 and was the first of his works to appear in an Amer-

ican edition. Other treatises were published through the nineteenth century, but the first complete edition was issued in German at Elkhart in 1876 and in English on the same press in 1871.

Dirk Philips, a co-laborer of Menno's, also wrote several books, the best known of which was *Enchiridion* or Handbook, a treatise on the characteristic Anabaptist doctrines, first published at Haarlem in 1578. The first American edition was published at Lancaster in 1811. Two later German editions appeared, and in 1910 it was translated into English by A. B. Kolb and published at Elkhart. It is still occasionally read among the Old Order Amish because the author stresses the strict observance of the "avoidance" practise. Philips was also one of the few old authors to write at length on the ordinance of foot-washing.

Among other books found occasionally on the bookshelves of the Mennonite pioneers were several books of sermons written for the most part by Dutch and north German ministers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Among these compilations were those of Jacob Denner (1659-1746), for many years a minister at Altona; and those written by Johan Deknatel, originally printed in Dutch, but later in 1757, in German. The latter were never issued in America, but Denner's collection was printed in 1792 in Germany at the expense of two Pennsylvanians for the Pennsylvania Mennonites. The book was a large volume of over 1,500 pages, and the edition consisted of five hundred copies. In 1830, a book of sermons by Wilhelm Wyngantz, also a minister at Altona, was translated from the Dutch by David Zug, an Amishman, of Belleville, Pennsylvania, and published at Lancaster.

Among other old books popular in Mennonite homes for years, all in German, were *Golden Apples in Silver*

Shells, printed at Ephrata in 1745, at the request of the Mennonite church; *Spiritual Flower Garden of the Inner Soul*, published for the eighth time in America in 1800; and *The Wandering Soul*, written by a Mennonite minister at Alkmaar, J. P. Schabalie, in the seventeenth century, printed many times in the Dutch, translated into the German and recently published for the fourteenth time in America at Scottdale, Pennsylvania. This is undoubtedly the most popular Mennonite book ever written, outside of the Martyr book, of course, and the works of Menno Simons, though it does not deal with a distinctly Mennonite question.

The book was popular among Mennonites everywhere in Holland, Germany, Russia and America. It is perhaps the only Mennonite book that has had a wide reading public outside Mennonite circles. The first American edition was published in Germantown in 1763, and the last in Scottdale in 1919. It was also published several times in English.

The first book written by an American author was *A Mirror of Baptism with Spirit, Water and Blood*, published in 1744 on the Christopher Sauer press and in four later editions. The author, Bishop Heinrich Funck, migrated to America in 1717 and became the founder of a long line of Funks, many of them prominent publishers, including J. F. Funk, founder of the Mennonite Publishing Company of Elkhart; and Joseph Funk, pioneer Virginia printer. Bishop Funk also wrote a more extended work, *Restitution*, a treatise on a number of the principal points of the Law, their fulfillment and significance. The book was published by his children after his death, was reprinted at Lancaster in 1862, and was put through an English edition at Elkhart as late as 1915. This book has the distinction of being the only American Mennonite

work to be published abroad, being used at Biel, Switzerland, in 1844.

Christian Funk, son of the above, and founder of the first division in the American church, published at Germantown in 1785 a justification of his activities, which in 1805 appeared in English as *A Mirror for all Mankind*.

Not to be forgotten among eighteenth century writings was Christopher Dock's *Schul Ordnung*, published after his death in 1770, by Christopher Sauer, Jr.

During the early and middle nineteenth century the books of Mennonite authorship were for the most part controversial in character and were written by the founders of various church divisions in defence of their views and activities. Among these men were John Herr, Daniel High, Daniel Musser, John H. Oberholtzer (1809-1895), John Holdeman (1832-1900) and Jacob Stauffer.

The most enduring literary work done in the last hundred years has been that in the realm of church history. The earliest work in this field was Benjamin Eby's *Short History of the Mennonites*, which appeared first in 1841 in Berlin, Canada, and whose chief merit is that it appeared first. Daniel Musser's *History of the Reformed Mennonite Church* was published at Lancaster in 1873. *A Brief History of the Mennonites* in German by Professor C. H. Wedel of Bethel College, in four volumes (1901-1904), is the best and most readable work on the subject that has yet appeared, although too much space is devoted to the pre-Mennonite period on the untenable theory that Mennonite history must be traced back to Apostolic days. C. H. A. van der Smissen, pastor at Summerfield at the time, published in 1895 a short treatise on the history and the doctrines of the Mennonites, which also included his father's translation of the Cornelis Ris Confession of Faith. D. K. Cassel's *Geschichte der Mennoniten* first published in German in 1890, and in English

two years earlier, is largely a compilation of historical articles appearing in earlier publications, and written by other authors, many of them from the pen of Governor S. W. Pennypacker. Governor Pennypacker, himself of direct Mennonite descent, was greatly interested in Mennonite affairs and was one of the pioneer writers to arouse general attention to the importance of early American Mennonite history. H. P. Krehbiel's exhaustive *History of the General Conference*, published in 1898 and his second volume just off the press will undoubtedly remain the authoritative work on the history of that movement. Hartzler and Kaufman's *Mennonite Church History* was printed at Scottdale in 1905. The same press published also in 1916 *Menno Simons, His Life, Labors and Teachings*, by John Horsch.

During the past twenty-five years an increasing number of scholarly works of an historical character have appeared, most of them University doctoral dissertations, on various regional and state histories, or treatises on missionary and educational developments among the Mennonites. Recently, too, there have been numerous brief works on the experiences of the Mennonites in Russia since the Bolshevik revolution by late immigrants to the United States and Canada.

It will be observed that all these treatises deal with practical subjects, and can hardly be classed as pure literature. There is very little poetry or fiction. Non-Mennonite novelists, however, have occasionally tried their hand at depicting Mennonite characteristics. The best known of recent novels in this field is still Helen R. Martin's *Tillie a Mennonite Maid* written in 1904, featuring the Mennonites of Lancaster county. Later novels by Mrs. Martin in this same field have not reached the popularity of her first effort. In 1924, Miss B. Mabel Dunham of Kitchener, Ontario, wrote of the Ontario Mennonites

in her *The Trail of the Conestoga*, which contained a Foreword by the Hon. W. L. McKensie-King, the Prime Minister of Canada, whose original home had been in Kitchener among the Mennonites. In a later novel *Toward Sodom* Miss Dunham chose the immigration of the Russian Mennonites to Manitoba as a subject for her effort. *The Straw in the Wind*, written by an embryo young Indiana authoress recently, depicting in an unfavorable and false light the life among the Amish of northern Indiana, has not received much public notice. Of all these literary efforts Miss Dunham's has shown the most sympathetic attitude toward her subject.

The only Mennonite writer worthy of mention who has tried his hand recently at fictional treatment of Mennonites is a young Oklahoman, Gordon Friesen by name, whose first novel, *The Flame Thrower*, issued by the Caxton Press, uses the Krimmer Brethren as subject matter for his effort; and their elder, old Jacob Wiebe, as the center of the plot, but whether hero or villain is not quite certain. *The Flame Thrower* is rather weak in plot, confusing as to its ultimate purpose, and unsympathetic in its treatment of its subject, but shows real literary genius in spots, with considerable ability in character delineation and promise for the future.⁶

In any discussion of the reading matter to which our Mennonite forefathers had access and which they perused for pleasure or profit we must by no means neglect to mention *Sauers' Almanac*, issued at Germantown during the eighteenth century; and *Baer's Almanac* from Lancaster, printed throughout the nineteenth century and still found for sale in the bookstores of every Pennsylvania German community. Important, too, as sources of valu-

6 The recent book *Rosanna of the Amish*, by Joseph W. Yoder is by far the most accurate and sympathetic story of the Amish yet written, but it is really more biography than pure fiction.

able historical information are the various Year Books published by the presses of the Old Mennonites and the General Conference Mennonites, as well as several of the other groups.

Hymnology

In the field of Mennonite hymnology the old *Ausbund* easily holds the center of interest. The *Ausbund*, which is undoubtedly the oldest hymnbook still in use anywhere in America, consists of a collection of one hundred and forty hymns from various sources, including a nucleus of fifty-one originally composed for the most part by a group of Swiss Mennonite captives driven out of Austria and imprisoned in the castle of Passau on the Bavarian frontier between 1535 and 1537. This collection was first printed during the middle of the sixteenth century, since which time twelve editions appeared in south Germany and Switzerland, the last issue being printed at Basel in 1838. This book became the adopted hymnal of the Swiss and south German Mennonites for several hundred years. When the first Palatines came to Pennsylvania they brought this book with them, as did also the Swiss Mennonites and the Alsatian Amish in Ohio and Illinois in the early nineteenth century. The first American edition was printed at Germantown in 1742. It has appeared in eleven American editions since, the last appearing at Elkhart in 1913.

This old book was never revised, merely reprinted, thus perpetuating its original quaint colloquial Swiss-German. Many of the hymns are detailed narratives of the trials and the sufferings of the early martyrs; others consist of lengthy discourses upon some points of doctrine. Few of them possess anything of a lyrical quality. Most of them are long, several of them consisting of some scores of stanzas. They were printed without music.

The melodies to which they were sung were transmitted from one generation to another and in the process, tunes were developed that defied both rhythm and time. To sing one song often required the better part of an hour. The opening verse of the Haslibacher hymn, still occasionally sung among the Old Order Amish, strangely enough at weddings and other festive occasions, is typical of the narrative character of many of the songs:

*"Was wend wir aber heben an
Zu singen von ein'm alten Mann
Der war von Haslibach
Haslibacher ward er genannt
Aus der Kilchoeri Sumiswald."*

Another collection of hymns almost equally as venerable as those of the Ausbund is the collection used in worship by the Hutterites, many of which are also martyr stories first told in the sixteenth century. The collection was preserved in manuscripts in the archives of the various Bruderhofs and were not put in print until 1916, when the Dakota Hutterites had them published at Scottsdale, Pennsylvania.

Although the Ausbund is still in use among the Old Order Amish, it was early discarded by the Pennsylvania Mennonites as well as by the Ohio Swiss, who also brought the old hymnal with them in the early part of the past century. Some of the successors of the venerable hymn book in Pennsylvania were the *Die kleine Geistliche Harfe* published in Franconia, in 1803; the *Unpartheisches Gesang Buch*, in Lancaster in 1804; the *Unpartheische Lieder Sammlung* in 1870. Among the Old Mennonites the first English hymnal was printed on the press of Joseph Funk, at Singers Glen, in Virginia, in 1847. The General Conference published, in 1873, the *Gesangbuch zum Gottesdienstlichen und Haeuslichen Ge-*

brauch. In recent years numerous revised hymnals have appeared among the various groups. Some of the smaller conferences have adopted song books either from other branches of the church or altogether from other denominations or publishing houses. The Russians and Bavarians brought with them at the time of their immigration such hymn books as were in use in their home churches, but later adopted those of the Conferences they affiliated with, mostly the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren.

Publishing Houses

Each branch of the church today has its own church paper. Most of these were at first started as a private enterprise by some aggressive member more concerned for the welfare of his church than the common run, but later taken over officially by the various conferences. Among the early Mennonite literary centers were Singers Glen in Virginia, where in 1847 Joseph Funk established a small printing press on which he published the well known song book the *Harmonia Sacra*, and various other early books on song and religion; Milford Square, in Bucks county, Pennsylvania, was the home for a time of the literary productions of John H. Oberholtzer, and later of the Eastern Mennonite Conference, including, in 1852, the *Religoeser Botschafter*, and in 1881, the *Mennonite*, as well as numerous pamphlets and books by Mennonite writers mostly of the General Conference wing; Berlin, Ontario, was the home of Benjamin Eby whose son Heinrich operated a printing establishment in which were printed a number of pamphlets and books of Mennonite interest, including Benjamin's brief history of the Mennonites, in 1841. The largest and by far the most influential early private Mennonite publishing house was the Mennonite Publishing Company established by John

F. Funk, in 1864, first in Chicago but soon removed to Elkhart, Indiana, where he published for many years the *Herald of Truth* and its German companion, *Herold der Wahrheit*, the complete works of Menno Simons, the Martyr book, and numerous other Mennonite periodicals and books.

The Mennonite Publishing House located at Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, now owned by the Old Mennonite church conference is the successor to the Elkhart house; and publishes all their periodicals and other books and supplies. The General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America does not have a publishing house of its own. Its publication interests are looked after by a publication board, which thus far has had most of its printing needs provided for by the Berne Witness Company of Berne, Indiana, and the Herold Book and Publishing Company of Newton, Kansas, both privately Mennonite owned.

The following are the various church organs at present—General Conference, the *Mennonite*, and *Christlicher Bundesbote*; Old Mennonites, the *Gospel Herald*, and the *Christian Monitor* for the young people; Mennonite Brethren, the *Zionsbote*; Central Conference, the *Christian Evangel*; Mennonite Brethren in Christ, the *Gospel Banner*; Defenseless Mennonites, *Zion's Call*; Krimmer Brethren, *Wahrheits Freund*; Reformed Mennonites, *Good Tidings*; Old Arder Amish, *Herold der Wahrheit*. The *Mitarbeiter*, for some years the official organ of the progressive Mennonite group in Manitoba and published at Gretna has since suspended. The *Bruecke* represents the Mennonites of Brazil; and the *Menno Blatt*, those of Paraguay, both privately owned. Among the other private papers with a large Mennonite circulation, mostly among the Russian Mennonites, and of both religious and secular interest are the *Mennonite Weekly*, and *Der Herold*, of Newton Kan-

sas; the *Vorwaerts*, of Hillsboro, Kansas, intended for the Mennonite Brethren readers; the *Rundschau* first published in 1880 at Elkhart by J. F. Funk, for the Russian Mennonites but now in Winnipeg largely for the same reading public; and *Der Bote*, devoted largely to the special interests of the late Russian immigrants, and published at Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

A Farmer Folk

With the exception of the first colonists in Germantown, the American Mennonites have been almost exclusively a farmer folk. They were farmers in Europe; and they became farmers in America, as did their children and children's children for generations after them. It is doubtful whether fifty years ago there was a single Mennonite church in America in a village of more than one thousand. The city always seemed to these country bred people more or less a center of worldly influence. Even today, with the exception of two congregations in Philadelphia, one in Los Angeles, and another in Winnipeg, the former composed of Old Mennonites, and the latter of recent immigrants from Russia, there are no self-supporting congregations in any of the large cities. Such congregations as are found in the other large centers of population are either still mission stations or just emerging from a mission status.

The churches in such small cities as Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Newton, Kansas; Goshen and Elkhart, Indiana; Kitchener, Ontario; Scottdale, Pennsylvania; and Bloomington, Illinois, have usually grown up around some printing establishment, some college or other church enterprise, and augmented by business men who have drifted into the city from large surrounding Mennonite farm communities.

Increasingly, however, Mennonites are moving from

nearby large compact farm communities into small villages. In some of these small villages the Mennonite population forms a dominant influence, especially near the large Russian settlements in Mountain Lake, Minnesota; Halstead, Hillsboro, and Buhler, Kansas; Henderson, Nebraska; Reedley, California; Freeman, South Dakota; Rosthern, Saskatchewan; and numerous small villages on the fringe of the Mennonite Reserve in Manitoba; the Swiss settlements in Pandora and Bluffton, Ohio, and Berne, Indiana; the Old Mennonite settlements in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and others.

Mennonites have always been good farmers, among the best in the land. They are never found on poor soil, having somehow developed a keen sense of discrimination for good land in all pioneer settlements. If perchance they made a poor choice they moved out as soon as an occasion was presented. In Woodford county, Illinois, the Amish first settled in the early part of the century, before the prairies were opened up, on the washed out clay timberlands in the western end of the county. With the opening up of the rich prairie lands in the eastern end of the county after the Civil war, the Amish Mennonites were the first to leave their clay knobs; and today there is hardly a single Mennonite left on the original farms. The poorest section of Lancaster county is the southern tip, but not a single Mennonite farmer among the twenty-five thousand Mennonites is found in this area.

Several years ago the United States department of Agriculture designated Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and McLean county, Illinois, as the two wealthiest farming counties in the nation. Both of these counties have a large Mennonite population.

Any one acquainted with the favorite farming sections of the country will easily recognize the truth of the above claims that Mennonites are good farmers—Wayne

county, Ohio; Lancaster county, Pennsylvania; McLean and Livingston counties, Illinois; Johnson and Washington counties, Iowa; Harvey county, Kansas; the Mennonite Reserve, Manitoba. Land prices are highest in Mennonite communities. Perhaps the highest price ever paid for ordinary corn land in the United States was paid for a Livingston county farm of one hundred and sixty acres, during the land boom directly after the late war—seven hundred dollars per acre.

Of course while Mennonites in the main remained on the farm, yet there were always young men here and there a bit more ambitious than their fellows, who found their way into the cities, and entering business or professional life, made good. Such prominent American names as *Rittenhouse*, *Pennypacker*, *Landes*, *Frick*, *Cunard*, *Herr*, *Hershey* and many others are plain evidence of the fact that not all the Mennonite boys stayed down on the farm. But there were not enough of them in the cities to form church congregations. And they never came back to either the farm or the church. To their credit be it said, however, they usually retained their religion, and gave valuable service to other denominations.

Among the other lines of occupation and professions that were open to Mennonites of conservative leaning, the least objectionable was that of the teacher. An unusual number of Mennonites are found in this profession, both in the public schools and in colleges and universities. There is hardly a large college or university in the land today that does not have on its faculty one or more professors of immediate or indirect Mennonite origin.

Medicine, too, as well as nursing among the young women, has a strong appeal for such as see in it a fruitful field for serving their fellow men. Law has never been popular among the Mennonites, and there are not many lawyers among them, except one here and there among

the General Conference Mennonites and several of the other more liberal wings. From this group, too, have come in recent years several Congressmen and members of state legislatures, a United States Senator, an attorney general in a middle west state, numerous mayors of small towns and cities and a few also in larger cities, several judges and other public officials. It is perhaps even questionable whether a successful member of the legal profession can remain a bonafide, non-resistant, war opposing, lawsuit-opposing Mennonite of the traditional type.

In late years also Mennonites have entered the business world, and have contributed their share to the captains of industry and successful business men.

With the growth of Mennonite colleges and increase of college graduates Mennonite young people have developed a greater respect for their church, and many of them, retaining their membership, have exerted a wholesome influence in maintaining higher standards throughout the church of social responsibility and religious tolerance. Even such as left the denomination, most of them, have taken with them into life many of the lessons of industry, and religious sincerity, inherited from pious parents, which have served them well in their struggle for success. Mrs. Otelia Augspurger Compton, of Wooster, Ohio, herself of Mennonite parentage, and the mother of a family of famous sons and daughters (including Arthur Holly Compton the recipient several years ago of the Nobel prize for brilliant achievement in the field of physics) and voted, in 1939, the outstanding American mother by the Golden Rule Foundation, a national organization, upon being asked her recipe for raising famous sons, replied that she always held up before her children high standards of two values which she had been taught by her pious parents, members of the little Mennonite church at Trenton, Ohio—work and religion.

XVII

KEEPING THE FAITH

CHURCH AND STATE

THE OATH

On no other points of their faith have the American Mennonites been so often misunderstood as on their attitude toward the oath and warfare. Their objection to the oath and their refusal to bear arms have been repeatedly misconstrued, both in Europe and America, as indicating a spirit of disloyalty to their adopted country. In Pennsylvania the Mennonites were welcomed by the Quakers, who held similar views on these questions, but the law passed by the English Parliament permitting the affirmation instead of the oath applied to the Quakers only. Mennonites and others who had similar scruples against the taking of the oath in becoming naturalized were compelled to petition for the privilege. The Mennonites, in 1717, and the Amish, in 1742, were granted the rights of affirmation.

In Maryland the constitution of 1776 specifically mentions "Quakers, Tunkers, and Menonists," to whom the right of affirmation is guaranteed wherever an oath would otherwise be required. Today this right is guaranteed both by the Federal Constitution and in practically every state, and frequently even those not belonging to a non-resistant faith avail themselves of the privilege.

The refusal to take the oath did not seem to involve

the Pennsylvania Mennonites in any serious consequences before the Revolutionary war; but the Declaration of Independence, which severed the political ties between Pennsylvania and the British Empire, introduced a new problem. The Pennsylvania Assembly passed an act on June 13, 1777, demanding that all inhabitants of the former province now take an oath of allegiance to the new sovereign state. According to this act all male inhabitants above the age of eighteen were to take the oath before the following July, renouncing their allegiance to the king of Great Britain, and promising loyalty to Pennsylvania as an independent state. Later amendments to the act provided that all those refusing to take the oath were to be sent to jail for thirty days or pay a heavy fine. The third refusal was to be followed by an order of exile from the state within thirty days and the confiscation of all the personal property of the one expelled.

The act was aimed at the Tories, of course, but also involved some Mennonites who had a tender conscience on the matter of oaths in general. In the large compact areas like Lancaster county, where the principles of the Mennonites were well known, and where their numbers served as a restraining influence against hasty action, there was probably little difficulty in convincing the authorities that the hesitancy of the Mennonites to take the prescribed oath was not due to their political principles, but rather to their religious convictions. In the smaller isolated communities, however, the Mennonites occasionally encountered serious difficulty. We have on record the experiences of at least one community at Saucon in Northampton county, where they paid the extreme penalty for their convictions. The whole adult male population seemingly of the congregation was sent to jail, all their personal belongings, including bedding, stoves, furniture, dishes, food supplies, and even their

Bibles were confiscated; and their wives and children deprived of all the necessities of life, ordered to leave the state within thirty days. A petition to the General Assembly on September 10, 1778 by the wives of several of the prisoners, accompanied by a similar petition from some of the non-Mennonite neighbors, attesting to the good reputation of the Mennonites, and ascribing their reluctance to take the oath and their "present blindness to their own essential interests" to an "unhappy bias in their education and not from any disaffection to the present government," may have brought some relief. We have no further record of what disposition was made of these victims of the war spirit. It is likely, however, that the men were released and the order for exile repealed, though it may be entirely likely that their property, classed with that of the Tories, may have remained in the possession of the state.

MILITARY SERVICE

Exemption from military service was also generally recognized, and conscientious scruples were always given careful consideration by those in authority. The only Colonies in which Mennonites were located at the time of the Revolutionary War were Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. In each of these Mennonites were exempted from military musters, which seemed to be generally provided for by the local county authorities, upon the payment of a sum of money usually called a fine. In Virginia, however, in 1777, where provisions were made for conscription, Mennonites in case they should be drafted for service were to be discharged upon furnishing a substitute, who was to be paid by a levy upon the membership of the entire church.

After the war, in 1790, the constitution of Pennsyl-

vania declared that "those who conscientiously scruple to bear arms shall not be compelled to bear arms, but shall pay an equivalent." A law of Maryland, in 1793, provided that "Quakers, Mennonites, and Tunkers and all others who are conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms, and who refuse to do military duty shall pay a sum of three dollars annually. The Virginia code of laws in force, in 1860, provided that all privates refusing to attend military musters must pay a fine of seventy-five cents, which of course the Mennonites freely paid. The wars of 1812 and of 1848, as well as the war of 1898, were all fought by volunteers, and consequently there was no occasion to test the faith of the non-resistant churches.

In the Civil War, both the North and the South were finally forced to resort to conscription. The Federal act of February 24, 1864, exempted those having conscientious scruples, permitting them to accept hospital service when drafted, or to pay \$300 exemption money. No person, however, was to be entitled to the benefit of this clause unless his declaration of conscientious scruples "shall be supported by satisfactory evidence that his deportment had been uniformly consistent with such declaration." This exemption clause, it will be observed, differed from the provision permitting substitutes, by which one could secure exemption by furnishing a substitute at such price, of course, as the substitute demanded. Under this law Mennonites were able with but few exceptions to live their life of non-resistance undisturbed in their various communities.

In the South, Virginia resorted to universal service almost from the beginning, and no exceptions were made in behalf of religious scruples. A number of Mennonites from Rockingham county were called into the army in 1861. These refused to fight. Others were captured at-

tempting to escape through the lines into the North. These were imprisoned in *Libby Prison* for a time and tried, but because of their religious convictions were permitted to go home. Early in 1862 Virginia passed a law exempting members of a church forbidding the bearing of arms upon the payment of \$500, and the further sum of two per cent of the assessed valuation of all taxable property. In case of the refusal of such members to comply with this law or the inability to do so, they were to be taken into some form of non-combatant service.

This law, however, was soon superseded in the same year by the general conscription act of the Confederate Government, which also provided for the exemption of members of the "Society of Friends, Association of Dunkards, Nazarenes and Menonists" upon the payment of \$500. All these religious denominations, being opposed to both slavery and war, were bitterly denounced in their communities by those not of their faith, but they were not compelled to take up arms by the Government until the summer of 1864, when, because of the great need of men, the Confederate Congress repealed all exemptions. A number of the young men escaped through the lines into western Virginia and into the North. The Mennonite communities, being located in the heart of the Shenandoah valley, also suffered heavily from the numerous raids made through the valley.

Canadian Laws

The Canadian Government has been more considerate of conscientious scruples even than the United States. As early as 1808, Ontario passed a law exempting "Quakers, Menonists and Tunkers" from militia service, upon an annual payment of twenty shillings in time of peace, and five pounds when the militia should be called out for defense. Refusal to comply with this law was

to be punished by a jail sentence of not more than a month. In 1839, after the union of the Upper and Lower Provinces, the fine was raised to ten pounds instead of five, and later several minor changes were made in the law, but its general purport remained the same. In 1868, after the formation of the present Dominion of Canada, an act was passed exempting Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkards and all members of other religious denominations opposed to war from militia service under such conditions as the Governor-in-Council might prescribe. This law was still in force at the time the recent war broke out, although perhaps not generally known. The Conscription Act of 1917 exempted from combatant service all religious bodies opposed to war in principle.

The clause in this act which exempts only from combatant service, it will be observed, differs from the act of 1868, which exempts from all service. The act of 1868 was the basis on which the Canadian Government promised the Russian Mennonites who settled in Manitoba in 1873 complete military exemption as a condition of their migration to that Province. The State of Kansas also guaranteed exemption from military musters to all those conscientiously opposed to bearing arms, in behalf of the Russian Mennonites in 1874. This guarantee was confirmed as late as 1915, but it is of no value, since it is subservient to the Federal law on the subject. Nebraska followed a few years later with a similar law.

When the recent Canadian Conscription act was passed the Government, upon being reminded of this early regulation and promise by a committee of Mennonites from the western Provinces, graciously agreed to abide by the promises made to the early Russian settlers in 1873, and granted entire exemption to all the descendants, both baptised and unbaptised, of the original Russians. Whether this liberal provision would apply

also to the Mennonites of Ontario, who were not a party to the agreement of 1873, but were included under the act of 1868, at first seemed doubtful. A number of Ontario young Mennonites were taken into the army at first, and upon refusing to serve were court martialed and given a two-year prison sentence, but which was later changed to farm furloughs. As just indicated, the laws of 1868 and 1917 were not quite similar, but the Canadian Government finally decided to abide by the more liberal provisions of 1868 and the promises of 1873, and thus granted the Ontario Mennonites the same generous consideration as that given to members of the church in Manitoba and the western Provinces.

The Canadian churches also took a stand in the beginning of the war against contributing to war loans. But upon the promise of the Government at the time of the last loan that Mennonite money was to be used only for relief purposes and not for direct war purposes, the Russian churches all endorsed the loans, and it is estimated that they raised about a half million dollars in the western Provinces. Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. campaigns they supported heartily. In the last drive each farmer was expected to contribute fifty dollars for each quarter section of land, and business and professional men accordingly. It is estimated that some \$200,000 was raised for this work, an average of over six dollars for every man, woman and child among them.

Few of the young men enlisted in the service and such as did were usually considered as having forfeited their membership. The price paid by the Mennonites, however, for their exemptions was disfranchisement for the period of the war. The Dominion Government was considerate of Mennonite scruples throughout the war, but in some localities, especially in the extreme West,

considerable bitterness began to develop near the close over a new problem. The question as to whether the exemption applied to Mennonites who should enter Canada after the passing of the Conscription act was precipitated by the migration of a number of Mennonites from the States, especially the Hutterites from South Dakota, who bought large tracts of land in Saskatchewan and Alberta for the purpose of escaping service and intimidation in the United States. Appeals were made to the Government by numerous local organizations not only to prevent the settlement, but even to repeal the original exemption clause. The Government took no formal action on the matter, but it seemed the opinion of many of those in authority that such immigrants were not entitled to the exemption; and had the war continued much longer, measures would perhaps have been taken to restrict the privileges of the new arrivals. As it was, much bitter feeling was developing throughout the Northwest, especially against the Hutterites, who claimed to be Mennonites. Since the close of the war this opposition has largely died down. The Hutterites, too, are not sure that they made a wise choice in selling their fine homes in South Dakota at such a sacrifice, and many are wishing themselves back again.

The Conscription Act of 1917

Within the United States this war tried the faith of the Mennonites as no other American war ever did. The struggle was on such an enormous scale, and demanded such a complete mobilization of the nation's resources that every single individual was called upon as in no other war to bear his share of the burden. The universal service law, the popular Liberty Bond campaigns; and Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. fund drives immediately singled out and marked as "slackers" those who would

not participate, no matter what their motives may have been.

The National Congress, however, influenced by numerous petitions from the non-resistant churches, by influential Quakers, the example of the English conscription act, and our own former precedents, included an exemption clause in the conscription law passed May 18, 1917. This clause was found in the bill as it came from the hands of the Committee on Military Affairs. It was debated, several attempts were made to amend it; and one vote was taken in the Senate to repeal it, but it stands now practically as it came from the hands of the committee. The clause exempts on religious grounds:

"Members of any well organized religious sect or organization at present organized and existing whose creed or principles forbid its members to participate in war in any form and whose religious convictions are against war or participation therein in accordance with the creed or principles of the said organization. But no person shall be exempted from service in any capacity that the President shall declare non-combatant."

Under this law a number of young Mennonites were drafted and taken to various camps during the summer and fall of 1917. In the meantime the church leaders were formulating the policy for the church at large toward the war problem. The view became quite general during the summer that in order to maintain their non-resistant principles they could not even accept non-combatant service if it was to be conducted under the military department of the Government. The *Gospel Herald*, the most conservative of the church papers, and representing over half of the constituency, not only opposed the acceptance of non-combatant service, but even declared it inconsistent to participate in Red Cross, Y. M. C. A. and Liberty Loan campaigns, and all other campaigns for

direct war purposes. Several of the other papers reflected the same opinion, but none of them were so outspoken. The *Mennonite*, organ of the General Conference, while thoroughly in sympathy with the non-resistant attitude, advocated the purchase of bonds, and participation in all the auxiliary war fund drives. A meeting held at Goshen, Indiana, July 9-10, 1918, of representatives from nearly all of the branches of the denomination, declared against entering non-combatant service under the military arm of the Government, and sent a petition to the President stating their decision. During all this time, too, a number of special committees from the various branches of the church were in communication with the War Department working in behalf of some sort of service not under the military organization.

The Conscientious Objector

The War Department in the meantime found the problem of the conscientious objector a difficult one. Many of the young men from all branches of the church refused to put on the uniform and to perform work of any sort. These were frequently roughly handled by petty officers who had little sympathy for their scruples nor the law under which they were permitted to enter non-combatant service. In all the camps they were subjected to ridicule and were considered fair game for any army officer or Y. M. C. A. secretary who cared to take a hand in converting them. Even some of the higher officers in some of the camps, being entirely out of sympathy with the liberal policy of the War Department, permitted unnecessary abuse of the conscientious objectors, as those were called who refused to work in the camps even at non-combatant work, and usually refused to don the uniform. In Camp Funston the worst abuses

prevailed, and two officers, a major and a captain, were removed for negligence in permitting rough treatment of the conscientious objectors. Some of these men were brutally handled in the guard house; they were bayoneted, beaten and tortured by various forms of the water cure; eighteen men one night were aroused from their sleep and held under cold showers until one became hysterical. At another time a man had the hose played upon his head until he became unconscious. The War Department finally was forced to interfere a short time before the armistice was signed with the result noted above.

In other camps similar abuse prevailed, carried on usually by under officers for the purpose of breaking down the morale of the conscientious objector, or perhaps to retaliate for his refusal to obey peremptory military orders. Men were forced to stand at attention, sometimes with outstretched arms for hours and days at a time on the sunny or cold side of their barracks, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather as well as to the jeers and taunts of their fellows until they could stand no longer; chased across the fields at top speed until they fell down exhausted, followed by their guards on motor cycles; occasionally tortured by mock trials, in which the victim was left under the impression to the very last that unless he submitted to the regulations the penalty would be death. Every conceivable device—ridicule, torture, offer of promotion and other tempting inducements were resorted to in order to get them to give up their convictions; but with only few exceptions the religious objectors refused to compromise with their consciences.

The following letter taken from J. S. Hartzler's *Mennonites in the World War* describes a typical treatment of many of the Conscientious Objectors in the training camps:

“

April 19, 1919

Dear Brother

I arrived at Camp Arthur, Texas, September 7, 1918. I refused to don the uniform, but they made a plea to send our clothing to Belgian sufferers, so I explained that I would be willing to have that suit sent, but that I would not wear the uniform. They said that I should put it on to go to the back of my tent and then I could change to my other civilian suit. This was simply a catch; I was not allowed to change. Many persistent efforts were made to get me to accept some kind of service. The sergeant threatened me, and according to his own words would have knocked me down with a club, if a higher officer would not have prevented him from doing so.

One officer asked me to accept work or get down and pray. I knelt and prayed especially for my persecutors, but was not allowed to finish. I was then taken to the stockade. The prisoners held a mock trial and sentenced me to “twenty-five tosses in the blanket and one hundred lashes with a leather strap.” They immediately gave me tosses and twenty-five lashes. They stopped to rest, gagged me, and proceeded to give me the remaining sixty-five lashes, this time using the buckle end on me. The same evening they held another trial, and this time sentenced me to five hundred lashes to be given the next evening.

While carrying out this sentence they would stop occasionally and ask me whether I would work now. Receiving a negative answer each time, they began again until the whole sentence was carried out. Before the third evening the authorities had forbidden any more mock trials. After a stay of several days more I was asked by a lieutenant from headquarters whether I refused to wear the uniform and carry a gun, and on my refusal he sent me back to the tent and allowed me to put on my civilian clothes.

Refusing again to cut wood for the mess hall, the officer called the whole company together and told them that they could do anything with me that they pleased except that they dare not kill me. That night they organized and expected to have some fun with me. The officer in charge, fearing results, placed four guards over me. I

was soon transferred to replacement camp. When ordered to do work which I could not conscientiously do, I was placed under another guard. He picked up a stick and began to beat me. I was then told that I dare not to speak to anyone, and no one was allowed to speak to me; that I was to mess at the rear end of the line and have short rations.

On October 2, I was taken to the base hospital very sick with influenza, and was there three weeks. Some time after I was out again they tried once more to compel me to take service. For my refusal I was placed into solitary confinement and on a "bread and water" diet for twelve days. It was very rainy at that time and the roof leaked. My five by ten foot cell was very damp and I was cold day and night. They took my Bible away from me, but I had a small Testament which they did not find. I read much of the time in that.

Had a court martial trial November 26, and was sentenced to five years imprisonment at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, but was released January 7, 1919."

Fortunately for the Mennonites, both President Wilson and Secretary Baker displayed the greatest consideration for the scruples of the sincere objectors. These abuses were not perpetrated with the consent of the War Department; and those guilty of them were usually punished as soon as discovered. Secretary Baker stretched the Conscription act to the limit to meet the situation. The Government was rather slow in working out a satisfactory policy, but by the spring of 1918 a fairly satisfactory system of taking care of the conscientious objector was evolved. The abuses above described continued in some of the camps, however, throughout the period of the war, due to the inability of the War Department to keep in close touch with all the details of the work of the vast military machine in charge of organizing the army.

On March 16, 1918, upon the suggestion of the War Secretary, Congress passed a law permitting the depart-

ment to furlough out certain men in camp for agricultural purposes whenever it was deemed advisable. On March 20, the President for the first time defined non-combatant service. On April 22, the War Department completed its program for the conscientious objector who refused all work. First of all a special Board of Inquiry, consisting of Julian W. Mack, of the Federal Bench, Dean H. F. Stone of the Columbia Law School, and Major Richard C. Stoddard of the United States Army, was appointed to visit the various camps in which conscientious objectors had been segregated and weed out those who were sincere from the spurious ones. Those who were found to be sincere were to be sent to a detention camp at Fort Leavenworth, from whence they were to be furloughed out for farm work. Court-martial was provided for three classes, the insincere, those who were defiant, and such as were engaged in active propaganda among others. The first class was to be sent into the ranks, while the other two were to be given prison sentence. This program was carried out only in part. The sincere objectors were not sent to the Fort Leavenworth detention camp, but were furloughed out for farm work directly from the camps to which they had been sent originally. Such as went to Fort Leavenworth did so under prison sentence.

The young men in the meantime in whose behalf the church was formulating its advice and the Government its war policy were compelled to work out their own line of action. Not all followed the recommendations of the Goshen meeting already referred to. As to the exact number who accepted some form of non-combatant service it is not quite certain. Neither has anyone ascertained as yet how many Mennonites were in all the camps. But since many had deferred classification both because of occupational and dependency reasons, the number was less than the general average of other classes. Perhaps

between fifteen hundred and two thousand, all told, were in camp and overseas during the war.

Of these it would seem that a large majority, take the denomination as a whole, refused service of any sort; a strong minority accepted non-combatant service with the uniform; while a very few entered the regular service. The church as a whole, and especially the leadership, stood quite unitedly in favor of maintaining the non-resistant doctrine. Among the young men, however, in different sections and in isolated congregations there was some difference of practise. The following random observations have come to the casual notice of the writer. The Hutterites were the only group whose young men stood as a unit against service of any sort. The Krimmer Brethren had fifty young men in camp. Twenty-eight of these were conscientious objectors; twenty took non-combatant service; and two entered the regular service, one of whom was killed on the battlefield. The Central Illinois Conference with a membership of twenty-six hundred reported in August in 1918, seventy-two men in the service. Of these twenty-six had enlisted; thirty-eight were in the regular service; twenty-seven were non-combatants, and only five were classed as conscientious objectors, who refused all work. Of the Old Menonites and Amish a large majority were conscientious objectors, though some of these accepted camp work. Among the Russians, both the General Conference and Bruedergemeinde, perhaps three-fourths of those in Kansas and Oklahoma, were of the conscientious objector class, while the remainder took non-combatant service. Barely a dozen among the Russians throughout the entire West took regular service. On the Pacific coast and in Minnesota there were a larger number of non-combatants and fewer conscientious objectors. The Eastern District Conference Mennonites generally accepted non-combat-

ant service. The Mennonite Brethren in Christ were largely of the conscientious objector class. The large Swiss community of Bluffton, Ohio, had a few men in the regular service, but all the rest were non-combatants. None were conscientious objectors. The Swiss congregation at Berne, on the other hand, had a number of conscientious objectors, several of whom were sent to Fort Leavenworth. One congregation in Iowa perhaps stood alone in having practically all of its young men in the regular service.

Mennonites were by no means the only people who refused to enter the army. Quakers, Dunkards and other peace denominations, totalling perhaps an entire population of one million, all came under the exemption clause of the Conscription act. Both the Quakers and the Dunkards, however, accepted the non-combatant service prescribed by the law far more generally than did the Mennonites. This circumstance, together with the fact that many of the latter were of more recent German origin, explains why the Mennonites were given more unfavorable publicity during the war than the other non-resistant denominations.

The original clause exempting only members of well recognized religious denominations was soon stretched by the War Department to cover conscientious objectors of any religious organization or none. Scruples had to be on religious grounds, however. Objection to war on political grounds was not recognized as a valid reason for any degree of exemption. The following extract from an article written by the Vice Chairman of the National Civil Liberties Bureau in the Survey of December 7, 1918, summarizes the status of the various conscientious objectors and shows that they were a varied company:

"Of the twelve or fifteen hundred conscientious objectors examined by the Board of Inquiry, approximately eighty

per cent are Christians, members of various sects opposed to war, of which the Quakers are the best known. The other twenty per cent are international socialists, Tolstoians, Jews, and other objectors hard to classify. Jewish objectors on simple religious grounds are few; Roman Catholics still fewer. Only one I. W. W. appeared before the Board, and only three Negroes. Most of the objectors rest their cases on a simple, rather naive religious prohibition of war; some of them base their position on a lofty and carefully thought out idealism—Christian, socialistic and humanitarian.”

Major Kellogg, a later member of the Board of Inquiry, in a recent book entitled *The Conscientious Objector*, states that twenty-one hundred objectors were examined by the Board, half of whom he estimates were Mennonites. Of these, fifteen hundred were recommended for farm or industrial furloughs; eighty for work in the Friends' Reconstruction Unit; three hundred and ninety for non-combatant service; and one hundred and twenty were sent back into the regular service as insincere. The above number does not include thirteen hundred who took non-combatant service, nor four hundred who were sent to Fort Leavenworth.

An interesting study made of one thousand conscientious objectors in twelve army camps by a special psychological board classified those studied as follows:

Mennonites	554
Friends	80
International Bible Students	60
Dunkards	37
Israelites of the House of David	32
Church of Christ	31
Church of God (colored)	20
Seventh Day Adventist	20
Pentecostal Assembly	13
All other denominations	206

Of the four hundred conscientious objectors confined in the disciplinary barracks at Fort Leavenworth at the close of the war, only about one-third were Mennonites. So far as the Mennonites and other religious objectors were concerned these were practically all here because of the wilful misrepresentation of local courts martial. The law provided only that the insincere and defiant be given prison sentence. The "wilful disobedience of orders of officers" which constituted the charge against practically all of these, of course, in reality meant the refusal of sincere objectors to obey orders which ran counter to their religious convictions.

Some of these prisoners at Fort Leavenworth, including a few Mennonites, suffered tortures that would have done credit to the medieval Inquisition at the hands of prison guards and officials for refusing to perform certain service which they regarded as inconsistent with their religious convictions. They were regarded by the prison authorities as ordinary criminals, and not as political prisoners. Some refused to work on the ground that the prison was a part of the military system; others, for various reasons, refused to put on the uniform; still others refused to work because of sympathy for those who were unjustly disciplined. Some of these men may have carried their logic to unnecessary lengths, but no matter what the provocation, there was no justification for the harsh measures adopted in breaking the spirit of these men whose only crime was a tender conscience. Among the methods resorted to were "continuous solitary confinement in cells in a hole under the basement of the prison, sleeping on a cement floor between foul blankets full of vermin, fed every alternate two weeks on bread and water, forbidden to read and write or talk, manacled in a standing posture for nine hours a day to the bars of

the cell. In addition they were frequently beaten and tortured by the guards."

Among those given this treatment were several Mennonites. Two Hutterite young men, who had been removed to Fort Leavenworth from Alcatraz where they had been submitted to the most brutal treatment for refusing to put on the uniform and perform the work assigned them, died as a result of exposure and torture received at the hands of prison guards. Two young Amishmen sent here from Camp Sherman refused to don the prison uniform because their creed forbade them to wear clothes with buttons. Both were forcibly disrobed by guards and held under cold showers until they were thoroughly chilled. One of them was dragged across the cell room by the hair, knocked down upon the cement floor and then pulled up by the ears and otherwise roughly handled. As a result of this treatment both of them submitted to prison labor contrary to their religious convictions.

The National Civil Liberties Bureau, together with such journals as the *Survey*, *Nation* and the *New Republic*, gave these abuses of the Conscientious Objectors in the Leavenworth prison wide publicity with the result that a short time afterwards the War Department ordered the abolition of manacling and other severe methods of punishment. Still later, January 25, 1919, one hundred and thirteen of the conscientious objectors, mostly Mennonites, were honorably discharged from the army and released from prison. The Mennonites here were principally from the western States, and largely from the Russian churches.

It is only fair to add, perhaps, that the large majority of the Mennonites at Fort Leavenworth had little cause to complain of their treatment as prisoners. It was only

those who because of their tender consciences refused to perform the prison work assigned them and to put on the prison garb who were given the drastic treatment described above.

These hundred, of course, constituted only a small portion of the Mennonite conscientious objectors. Many of them were furloughed out for farm work directly from their local camps. A number were permitted to enter the reconstruction work carried on by the Friends' Reconstruction Unit. The furlough system worked fairly well, but in some localities the non-Mennonite population objected to the presence of farm hands from the camps and they had to be sent back.

A Word for the Conscientious Objector

It is perhaps not out of place here to say a few words further in behalf of the conscientious objectors regarding their attitude toward war service. Not only were they subjected to these gross abuses in camp; they were also most bitterly reviled and denounced by almost the entire press of the country, the *Kansas City Star*, and the *Chicago Tribune* being especially severe in their criticism. There were few voices raised in their behalf either from pulpit or platform. Everywhere they were denounced as slackers, cowards, parasites, draft-dodgers; the most charitable epithet applied to them was that of religious fanatics. Theodore Roosevelt, always intolerant of any views contrary to his own, was most vindictive in his utterance against them. He suggested that all men who had conscientious scruples against war service should be sent to the most dangerous points of the front line with shovels to dig trenches; or be placed on mine sweepers; they were not fit to live in America, he said, and ought to be denied all political rights. It was only such liberal journals as the *Nation* and others as already noted, that

dared raise a voice in behalf of freedom of speech and liberty of conscience.

While much of this bitterness must be ascribed to war madness, yet some of it was due, no doubt, to the failure of the people in general to understand the character, and appreciate the point of view of the men who refused war service on the ground of conscientious convictions. The average citizen is so thoroughly indoctrinated all through his life in the school room, from the pulpit and the platform, and by the press with the idea that it is his most sacred duty to come to the defense of his country with gun and sword whenever called upon, that, unless he has been brought up in one of the non-resistant denominations, which make opposition to war as well as the taking of human life for any purpose whatever a fundamental religious doctrine, he utterly fails to appreciate how any one can have a conscience against the practise of warfare. Many regarded the conscientious objector as an ordinary draft-dodger, trying to shirk his honest duty; or endowed with a yellow streak that made him cringe from danger. Undoubtedly even under the most favorable circumstances there would have been considerable opposition to the granting of special privileges and exemptions even on grounds of religious scruples; yet a better understanding of the real spirit of the conscientious objector might have disarmed his more intelligent critics at least of some of their bitter antagonism.

A coward he certainly was not. The conscription act offered an easy way out for those who had scruples against war. Half of the Mennonites, and nearly all of the Dunkards and the Quakers accepted this easy escape. But the other half of the Mennonite contingent in the camps, refusing to compromise with their consciences

took the hard way. Who dares to call them cowards? Major Kellogg, one of the later members of the Board of Inquiry, though not sympathetic with their purposes, yet credits them with both sincerity and courage. Certainly it would have taken much less courage to accept clerical work in the department designated by the President as non-combatant, with the approbation of their fellows, which they could have had for the asking, than to face the guard house and prison sentence, physical suffering, and worst of all the curses of their comrades, by refusing to work. Neither was the conscientious objector a slacker. He was willing to do any kind of work, in the danger zone or out, if its purpose was to save life rather than to destroy it, and if it was not connected with the military establishment. He was neither a coward nor a slacker; he chose the hard road of loyalty to his convictions rather than the easy one of compromise. He was made of the same stuff as that of his forefathers who some hundreds of years earlier went to the martyr's stake by the thousands rather than to surrender religious beliefs which they thought to be right.

But even the warmest friends of the conscientious objector sometimes wondered whether he did not carry his logic to unnecessary lengths, and whether he at times did not strain at a gnat to swallow a camel. Why did he refuse to sow grass seed on the lawn in front of his barracks, or join the kitchen force at the mess hall? For two reasons—to cook for the soldiers under military orders, and as a part of the military machine committed him as much to the killing process as if he actually carried a gun to shoot his fellows; and secondly, the whole purpose of the camp officials was to break down the objector's morale, to find a flaw somewhere in his logic, by setting a trap for him to inveigle him into active service. If he could be induced to take one form of service he

might be led by easy steps into any other form. The objector knew the purposes of the officers, and drew the line at the only logical place possible, namely to refuse work of any sort connected with the military machine. That this was the situation at least in Camp Funston is shown in the following letter:

November 18, 1917

Hon. Arthur Capper
Governor of the State of Kansas
Dear Sir:

Your letter of November 10, accompanied by a petition from various Mennonites, addressed to General Wood, has been referred to this office. I have carefully gone over these petitions and wish to advise you that in every way we are carrying out the War Department's instructions in regard to the Mennonites and Conscientious Objectors. Further there is nothing that we can do in the matter. If these Conscientious Objectors under the care and treatment they receive at this camp can be talked into rendering any kind of work that is connected with the military service by their fellow soldiers it does not appear that their belief can be very solidly grounded.

Very respectfully,

N. C. Shiverick,

Major Ad. Gen., U. S. A.

Unable to appreciate the views of the conscientious objector against war, and failing to convict him of cowardice, many tried to explain him on the basis of low mentality. Accordingly the War Department, as already mentioned, appointed a special psychological board to study this strange phenomenon from a psychological point of view. The investigations were no doubt honestly and intelligently made, but the results were hardly what those responsible for the appointment of the board had expected. The conclusions of the special board were that the conscientious objectors were above the average of all enlisted men in intelligence.

War Drives

As to participation in the various campaigns for war and relief work there was a diversity of opinion and practise during the war. The leadership at first was quite generally agreed except among the more liberal congregations against any participation. But the pressure from local committees in most localities became so great that in almost every community there was a large number that supported the various campaign for funds. The Old Mennonites, Amish, Defenseless, Reformed Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren opposed all participation, but most of them under compulsion made some contribution to the various funds and bought bonds. Several attempts were made to escape the purchase of bonds directly by depositing money in local banks for a stipulated number of years, but which it was understood was not to be used for buying bonds, although it might release other money to be thus invested. In several localities scruples against supporting the war with money was satisfied by promising that money contributed would be used for the purchase of food, and not for ammunition and other means of warfare.

The Russians in the West as a rule contributed quite freely to Y. M. C. A. and Red Cross funds, but hesitated to buy bonds, although under compulsion many did so. The Middle District and the Eastern District of the General Conference, and the Central Illinois Conference bought quite freely, and contributed quite liberally to all funds.

Besides these funds the Old Mennonites and the Amish, assisted by the Central Illinois Conference and the Defenseless Mennonites, contributed heavily toward reconstruction work in France. Later relief work was also

taken up in Armenia. In 1919 when famine and pestilence spread among the Mennonites of south Russia most of the relief work of the various branches of the Mennonites, including the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren and other American Russian groups, was directed toward the assistance of their afflicted brethren in the land of the Bolshevists.

In spite of these efforts, however, and in striking contrast to the considerate treatment accorded them by the Federal Government, Mennonites in most communities were harshly criticized and frequently abused by the non-Mennonite population. Throughout central Illinois a number of church buildings were painted yellow by irresponsible hoodlum elements, as was the case also in many other sections of the country. In Kansas several men were tarred and feathered. The most serious attacks were made upon the German speaking Russians in Oklahoma. One minister was seized by a mob and strung up a telegraph pole, but rescued by local officials. Two other men were attacked and driven out of their community for preaching the Mennonite doctrine of non-resistance. Two Mennonite church houses were burned down, as was also a barn which was being used as a temporary meeting place. In Ohio one prominent minister was called from a prayer meeting and had his hair shorn because his donation to the Red Cross was not considered large enough by the mob which attacked him. Everywhere men were intimidated and abused by local committees for hesitating to purchase bonds or contribute to the various war funds, although Mennonites as a whole gave a great deal more to general relief work than those who abused them. In South Dakota the Hutterites after having been robbed of forty thousand dollars worth of live stock by an irresponsible hoodlum mob with the connivance of an official Liberty

Loan committee were forced to flee to Canada to escape further persecution at the hands of super-patriots.¹

Comparatively few communities escaped some form of intimidation or abuse from local mobs, or even Councils of Defense and self-styled Vigilance Committees. The newspapers, too, both local and metropolitan, throughout the entire country, were most bitter against the non-resistant churches, and especially the Mennonites, and many were unscrupulous in their attempts to stir up feeling against them. Few of the papers and few of the local communities were in sympathy with the liberal policy the Government followed toward the conscientious objectors.

The Government authorities were quite lenient, too, toward Mennonite publications and church leaders, who, under the guarantee of religious liberty, were permitted considerable freedom in advising their constituencies against participating in war activities. One editor of a Mennonite paper, however, was fined \$500 for printing an objectionable article. Most of the editors were wise enough in their papers to merely state the position of the church on all war questions, which under the guarantee of religious liberty they had a perfect right to do, but not to urge any opposition to the policies of the Government which under the Espionage act they could have been prosecuted for. A number of the Old Mennonite ministers who signed the Yellow Creek Conference resolutions advising the Mennonite young men against accepting non-combatant service were interviewed by Federal officials, and warned not to interfere too seriously with war measures. Had the war continued much longer several of the church leaders who were most outspoken against participating in the various war work campaigns

1 For an account of these experiences see *Christian Century*, November 13, 1940; Must the Hutterites Flee Again?

would perhaps have been placed under certain restrictions for the period of the war.

Relief Work

In the meantime such Mennonites as had scruples against participating in the various war drives, but at the same time were anxious to serve their fellow men during this time of crisis, and desirous as well of convincing the non-Mennonite world that their refusal to take any part in the destructive processes of war, was not due to any lack of loyalty to their country, nor to any selfish reasons, but rather to an ancient and deep-seated conviction that all war is wrong, sought other ways than through regular military channels to be of help to the civilian victims in the warring countries. They were willing to assume any burdens, or make any sacrifices necessary to restore and preserve human life, but refused to be any part of the killing process.

The Old Mennonites were the first to take official steps in this direction. As early as December, 1917, this branch of the church organized a Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers, which in the course of a few following years collected some \$300,000.00 to be distributed through the Friends Service Committee among the civilian war victims in France. A number of young men, mostly conscientious objectors, volunteered their services for this work, but none were admitted until after the signing of the peace treaty.

Immediately after the war, however, some fifty young men, mostly of the Old Mennonite persuasion, but several from the other branches as well, joined the Friends Service Committee in reconstruction work in the war stricken lands of Europe. A little later, too, twenty-six young men and two young women enlisted with the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, for relief work

among the refugees in that region. Over \$360,000.00 was collected for this service among the American Mennonites.

The General Conference, too, revived an earlier committee of some years standing, the Emergency Relief Committee, for the purpose of aiding war sufferers wherever they might be found; but they did not enter very extensively at first in the reconstruction work on the western front. Early in 1920 the churches of Russian descent in the West, the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Brethren, joined the western contingent of the General Conference in sending clothing and other supplies to their suffering fellow Mennonites in Siberia; but this project hardly got started before it had to be abandoned, because the door to Siberia had been closed by the civil wars in that region. The efforts of these branches of the church were then directed for a few years to relief for the needy people of central Europe, Germany, Austria, and Poland.

By 1920 also the American Mennonites had heard of the suffering and distress of their brethren in south Russia. From this time on relief work among all the branches of the denomination was turned in that direction. As noted in another chapter, on July 27, 1920, a new organization, representing the different branches, was perfected under the name of the *Mennonite Central Committee* (MCC). Cooperating in this effort were the *Emergency Relief Committee* of the General Conference; the *Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers* of the Old Mennonites; and similar committees from the Central Conference, the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Brethren. Other smaller groups also liberally supported the work of this committee, though not always through any subsidiary organizations of their own. But the splendid service rendered by the American Men-

nonites to their starving and persecuted Russian brethren during this critical period is described elsewhere, and needs no further reference here. All told it is estimated that during the war and the period immediately following, the entire denomination collected and distributed over \$2,500,000.00 among the various war-sufferers through all the different relief agencies above mentioned; all outside of any of the official Y. M. C. A., Red Cross or other war drives of the period.

Profiting by Their Experiences

The conscription act of 1917 found the Mennonites ill-prepared to meet the demands made upon them by the exigencies of war. For over two hundred years, with but few exceptions, they had enjoyed almost complete exemption from military service even in war time; and they had little reason to expect anything else for the future. Respect for religious conscience they thought had been won forever in America. Wars, too, it was generally believed, would be fought by volunteers, as they had been in the past. Their non-resistant doctrines had never been seriously challenged; and therefore had given them little concern. Like the other tenets of their faith, it had been taken for granted, and its practise no more to be challenged. But it was challenged with the results as already noted.

Profiting by their experiences in the late war, many Mennonites were constrained to re-examine and re-appraise these principles in the light of the new demands that likely would be again made on them in the case of another war; to clarify their thought beforehand; and fortify their resolution to remain firm in the faith if the worst should happen. Several of the larger branches of the denomination, especially the General Conference, the Old Mennonites, the Mennonite Brethren, and the Cen-

tral Conference have since appointed standing peace committees which by holding peace institutes and by printing peace literature, and through various activities have greatly strengthened the peace convictions among their members; and given them a new realization of the soundness of their faith as a solution for the troubles of a warring world.

Realizing also that the cause would be greatly strengthened by cooperation with other historic peace churches, the Mennonites have joined in numerous peace meetings with the Quakers and Dunkards.

Alongside of these efforts to clarify their own thinking, and to fortify their own convictions on the question of peace, the Mennonites have been assiduous in acquainting the general public, and especially the governing authorities with their peace principles and the grounds upon which they refused war service. From time to time at proper intervals, petitions have been sent to congressmen and the President commending legislation or executive action which in their minds would promote the peace of the country; or protests against measures that would have the contrary effect, all the time, too, informing the recipients of these petitions of the Mennonite stand on the war question. Noteworthy among the incidents in this campaign of education was a personal interview with President Roosevelt in February, 1937, by a committee composed of members of the three historic peace denominations—Quakers, Dunkards and Mennonites. In the course of the visit the President was presented with a statement of the peace principles held in common by the three churches, supplemented by special documents from each of the groups. The Mennonite representatives were Rev. A. J. Neuenschwander of the General Conference, and C. L. Graber of Goshen College, representing the Old Mennonites.

How the Mennonites, and especially the conscientious objectors will fare in future wars no one can say. But it is certain that they will be much better prepared to defend their faith than they were in the last war; and the ruling authorities, too, will be much better informed regarding the real character of those who refuse to kill their fellows even at the request of their government. It might be well to keep in mind, however, that in a democracy the majority is not likely to show a very high regard for the tender scruples of the minority in a time of great national crisis. The war resister may still have to pay heavily for his convictions for many years to come.²

2 Since the above chapter was written Dr. Emmet Harshbarger, Chairman of the General Conference Peace Committee, and Dr. Henry Fast, Peace Secretary, together with Dr. Harold Bender of the Old Mennonites, in cooperation with the leaders of the Peace cause among the Friends and the Brethren have done an outstanding piece of work in acquainting both the Government authorities at Washington as well as their respective churches with the claims of the Conscientious Objectors of the historic peace churches, with the result that the recent peace time conscription act includes a most liberal exemption clause for the religious conscientious objectors to military service.

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